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THE AIR SCOUT

THE BIG WAR SERIES

THE AIR SCOUT

An American Boy's Adventures When
the Big War in Europe Began

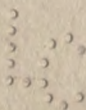
BY

ROSS KAY

Author of "The Search for the Spy," etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY


THOMAS N. WRENN



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PREFACE

The deeds of the aviators have played no small part in the big European war. The practical, and at times deadly, work of the daring air scouts has appealed to the imagination and the love of adventure, shared by American boys with their friends across the sea.

The writer of this tale has used accounts and reports which in the main he believes to be reliable. His object has been to interest his young readers not merely in the adventures and experiences of the hero, but also in the causes and actions of the great war itself. He has tried to avoid improbable and sensational deeds. He has visited most of the places to which reference has been made.

One strong motive in writing this story of our own times has been the hope that his young readers will gain a clearer insight into the causes of the struggle, the battles fought, and the results achieved. History in the making ought to be as interesting as history that has been made.

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There were evidently two men in each machine but it was impossible to tell what flags were showing. . . . *Frontispiece* ✓

When Leon opened his eyes a few moments later he found himself lying under the hedge by the roadside. . . . 18 ✓

The news spread like wildfire throughout the city. . . . 53 ✓

Seizing it in both hands Jacques swung it around his head. . . . 246 ✓

THE AIR SCOUT

CHAPTER I

AN ACCIDENT

“**B**ON jour, Monsieur. How can I serve Monsieur this morning?”

“I want to hire a motorcycle.”

Leon Platt was the speaker. He was an American boy of seventeen, spending the summer of 1914 in Europe. He and his twin brother Earl had come over in the same steamer and after being together in England for a brief time had separated. Earl had remained in England to visit some friends, while Leon had journeyed across the rough English Channel to France.

The boys had both French and English blood in their veins. In fact, Leon had been named for a great-uncle of his, Leon Guy, in his time a prominent physician in Paris. At present he was visiting an uncle and aunt who lived in France.

Their home was in Faubourg St. Germain. The word "faubourg" means suburb and the Faubourg St. Germain was a pretty little suburb of Paris. Here Leon had arrived a few days before the opening of this story and here he expected to stay for a short time before continuing his travels in different parts of Europe.

When at home in America both he and his brother Earl were accustomed to riding motorcycles. Each boy was the proud owner of a machine and they often had assured each other that there was no part of the machinery they could not immediately adjust in case of accident. Mr. Platt had often laughingly remarked that he believed his boys could tell exactly what was wrong with the engines, merely by the sound. At any rate they were experts, and especially Leon.

He had not seen very much of France thus far, but one thing had caught his attention when he first had entered the beautiful land. Gazing from the train windows on his journey from Calais to Paris, he had noticed the wonderful roads. Hard and white they were, smooth as the top of a table, and they seemed to extend end-

lessly into the country. To an enthusiastic motorcyclist like Leon these straight, wide roads meant only one thing. He promised himself that at the earliest possible moment he would secure a machine and try them out.

His uncle had directed him to a shop where motorcycles were to be rented, and thither Leon made his way the first time an opportunity presented itself. The proprietor, a talkative Frenchman, hastened to meet him as soon as he stepped inside the door and it was in response to his question that Leon had made his request for a motorcycle.

“Monsieur is familiar with the motorcycles?” said the proprietor in a dubious tone.

“Oh, yes, I think so,” laughed Leon. “I ought to be, for I have ridden one long enough.”

“A French machine?”

“No, never a French cycle. Only American makes, but they are all about the same, I guess.”

“I suppose so, but I do not like to have people ride my machines who do not know how to do it. You understand?”

“Yes, indeed,” exclaimed Leon. “I don’t

blame you a bit, either. I do know how though and I think I can soon show you that I do."

"Very well, Monsieur. This way if you please."

The proprietor led the way to the rear of his shop where the motorcycles were lined up along the wall.

"I like this one," exclaimed Leon, at once walking up to a bright crimson-colored machine. It was long and low and sturdy looking, but what had caught Leon's attention particularly was the fact that it had four cylinders.

"Ah, but, Monsieur, that is not my machine. It belongs to one of my clients, who but keeps it here."

"Have you no others like it?" inquired Leon disappointedly. He had singled out that particular one as it gave the appearance of speed, and speed was what Leon most wanted. Those fine hard roads looked like ideal race-tracks to him, and he hoped for a burst of speed perhaps with an automobile or another motorcycle.

"Yes, Monsieur, I have one just like it. But—" the dealer hastened to add as Leon ex-

claimed delightedly, "it is out just at the present."

"When will it be in?" asked Leon dejectedly.

"I cannot say, Monsieur. I am sorry, but will not Monsieur try any other?"

"I suppose so, if I can't have that one. I'd certainly like to try that out, though."

As he spoke there was a roar and a quick series of reports in front of the shop. A man covered with dust and dirt, on a big, blue, four-cylinder motorcycle, had just drawn up at the curb.

"That is it now," exclaimed the proprietor. "He is back sooner than I thought."

"That's great!" cried Leon. "And I may have it?"

"Certainly, if this gentleman is finished with it. I shall go for to find out."

The proprietor hastened out to the street and after a short conversation with the cyclist, returned to say that Leon might use the machine.

"You are certain you know how?" he again urged cautiously. "I would not want my fine machine broken, nor would I want you killed either."

“No danger of that,” laughed Leon. “Let me show you.”

Mounting the motorcycle he started the engine. The controls were on the handle bars and he speeded the motor until it almost roared and then slowing it down he started off and took a few turns around the street.

“I think Monsieur knows all right,” said the proprietor admiringly when Leon returned to the place where he was standing.

“I may use it?” asked Leon.

“Certainly. We will see if everything is in order and then you may start.”

Together they looked over the machine. A fresh supply of oil and gasoline was added and soon Leon was ready to go.

“How fast will she go?” he inquired as he sat on the machine waiting to start.

The proprietor shrugged his shoulders and laughed. “There is no use for me to tell Monsieur, for he would not believe me.”

“All right,” laughed Leon. “I’ll find out for myself.”

A short time later he was in the open country.

The roads proved as good as they looked and Leon was supremely happy. He had not let out his machine to its full extent but he had traveled faster than a mile a minute at times. The machine was a beauty and Leon already was revolving schemes in his mind for some day owning one like it. At the end of a half-hour he came to the top of a steep hill. At the bottom was a right-angled turn, and a high hedge by the roadside prevented a complete sight of the road.

Leon slowed up as much as possible down this slope, but he still was moving at high speed, for the motorcycle was heavy and hard to brake. He blew his horn as he neared the bottom but just as he turned the corner he crashed head on into a motorcyclist rounding the turn from the opposite direction.

CHAPTER II

DISABLED

WHEN Leon opened his eyes a few moments later he found himself lying under the hedge by the roadside. A young Frenchman was fanning him with his jacket, which he held in his two hands and snapped in Leon's face in very much the same manner that trainers fan the athletes in their charge.

"Where am I?" exclaimed Leon dazedly. His head ached and he felt sore all over his body.

"You are by the road," replied the Frenchman in English that had only a slight accent.

"Oh, yes, I remember," said Leon. "I was on a motorcycle, I think."

"You think correctly," laughed the Frenchman. "You are no longer on it now, however, and you left your seat more quickly than ever I have seen one do so before."

“The machine!” exclaimed Leon. “Is it damaged very much?”

“Not at all. A few scratches only.”

Leon tried to sit up, but fell back with a groan. His head almost seemed to be splitting, and when he moved he felt pains in every part of his body.

“Do not attempt to move,” cautioned the Frenchman. “There is plenty of time.”

Leon lay back and closed his eyes. Small black objects danced in front of his gaze and he felt as if he should faint. Soon he felt better, however, and opened his eyes once more. The young Frenchman had brought both motorcycles and placed them alongside the road, out of the way of passing vehicles.

Leon watched him interestedly and wondered who he could be. At any rate, thought Leon, he was pretty good to take so much trouble for a man who had run into him.

“Aren’t you hurt?” exclaimed Leon as the young Frenchman came up to him once more. “I haven’t even asked you that.”

“Not in the least bit. I am too tough and used to falls. I did not hurt myself this time at all.”

“It was all my fault,” protested Leon. “I am sorry and I want to apologize.”

“It was not your fault at all. It was mine. I was on the wrong side of the road and you could not help but run into me. I was going very fast in an attempt to gain speed for the steep climb up the hill. I turned the corner on the wrong side of the road, when instantly and with a sudden crash, you hit me.”

“Your machine is not damaged, I hope?” said Leon.

“Very slightly; it is nothing. The little pipe that carried the fuel into the engine is broken. That is all.”

“I can fix that easily for you,” said Leon.

“So can I fix it,” exclaimed the young Frenchman. “It is but a little work to do it.”

“You are sure it was not my fault that we had the collision?” once more insisted Leon.

“Absolutely. If it had not been my fault probably I should not have tried to make you conscious again after you fell. I should have been angry.”

“I don’t blame you,” laughed Leon.

Just then there was the toot of an automobile horn in the distance, and the young Frenchman hurried out into the middle of the road in the path of the approaching machine. The car contained only the driver, and as the young Frenchman held up his hand, it came to a full stop. There was a whispered conversation between the two men, and then they both came over to the place where Leon was lying. He had tried to get up but found himself entirely too weak.

The two men exchanged a few words in French which Leon did not understand. The driver of the automobile then grasped him by the feet, and the motorcyclist took hold of him under his arms.

“What are you doing to me?” Leon exclaimed.

“We shall put you in the automobile,” replied the young Frenchman.

“But where are you going to take me?” demanded Leon. “I am all right and can walk.”

“I think you had better not try it,” laughed the young Frenchman. “You are hurt more than you think. Just let me take care of things and you will soon be all right some more.”

Leon made no further protest. He was suffer-

ing intense pain and he found himself too weak to do anything but lie back in the arms of the two men who were carrying him. Soon he was placed in the tonneau of the machine, and the young Frenchman sat beside him with his arm around his waist.

The car started back down the road in the direction from which it had come. Leon felt too badly to ask any questions and the matter of where he was being taken had almost ceased to interest him. The only sensation he experienced was that of pain, and he kept his eyes closed and gritted his teeth most of the time.

Some two or three miles down the road the car turned off the main thoroughfare. A narrow lane, lined on both sides by huge poplar trees, ran off at right angles and it was this course the little party took.

It was not as smooth as the main road had been and the bumps did not serve to lessen Leon's suffering in the least. In a short time they came to the end of the lane, where a pretty white cottage was standing. A big collie dog came out barking to meet the approaching automobile and an

elderly man and woman appeared soon after at the front door.

This was all that Leon saw. Everything suddenly turned black in front of his eyes and he fainted.

When next he awakened he was lying in a white cool bed in a little corner room in the cottage. There was a vase of yellow flowers on a table nearby and white curtains were hanging at the windows.

The elderly woman he had seen outside stood beside him bathing his forehead with a cool wet cloth.

“Where is my motorcycle?” demanded Leon weakly. “I only hired it, you know; it doesn’t belong to me and so I must take good care of it.”

The woman did not understand English evidently, for as soon as Leon spoke she went outside and called, “Jacques!”

The young Frenchman who had taken care of Leon appeared and in response to the patient’s question, assured him that the motorcycle was being cared for.

“This is my home,” he continued. “My

mother and father are here, and here you will stay until you are better. Do not protest. You must remain here, and soon you will be well again. Just now you cannot move.”

“But my uncle and aunt!” exclaimed Leon.

“I will inform them. And where did you hire the motorcycle? I will return that also.”

Leon gave him the two addresses and then with a deep sigh fell into a heavy sleep.

CHAPTER III

A NEW FRIEND

IT was morning when Leon awoke. He realized now more fully than he had the day before how badly he had been hurt. His body was a mass of bruises and he found it almost impossible to move.

Jacques' mother, Mrs. Dineau, brought him his breakfast and shortly afterwards the doctor came. He examined Leon thoroughly and informed him that while no bones were broken and he was not injured internally, it would be folly for him to attempt to move at once. Several days might elapse, he said, before Leon could return to Paris.

Later in the morning, Leon's uncle and aunt also arrived. They had been greatly worried when Jacques had informed them, over the telephone, of the accident. Seeing how comfortable their nephew was, however, and being informed

that he was in no danger, they soon departed, much relieved.

“What would Earl think if he learned of the accident? Probably he would say it was all my fault and if I had known my business, I would never have been smashed into,” thought Leon.

The time passed quickly for the invalid, however. Mr. and Mrs. Dineau were very good to him and did all in their power to make him comfortable. They gave him books to read, but as they were in French, Leon was not able to make much out of them. Jacques had left home for a few days and as Mr. and Mrs. Dineau knew no English, Leon had a hard time making his wants known. Through force of necessity he learned a few French expressions from them.

On the fourth day Jacques arrived home again.

“How is the patient?” he exclaimed cheerily, bursting into the room as he spoke.

“I am in fine shape,” replied Leon. “I think I’ll get up and go home pretty soon.”

“Not yet, my friend, not yet. You must not be in such a hurry.”

“But I am imposing on you here.”

“Do not say that; it is not so.”

Jacques evidently meant what he said and Leon soon saw that he should not mention the matter again. Jacques came in to talk with him many times during the day, and Leon could not help liking him. He was so enthusiastic and sincere about everything, that he almost compelled one to grow fond of him.

“Tell me about America,” he urged. And Leon at once began to tell him of many facts concerning the great country across the sea. He spoke of the great rivers and mountains and plains. He told his new friend about the big cities and the tall buildings. These impressed the French youth greatly; he could scarcely conceive of a building more than sixty stories high. The thing he wondered at most of all, however, was the great extent of the United States. It seemed incredible to him that it should take five days on a fast train to travel from one end of the land to the other.

“And now,” said Leon when he had finished, “tell me about yourself.”

“Oh, I?” said Jacques quietly. “I am in the army.”

“In the army!” exclaimed Leon. “That is an interesting life.”

“Sometimes,” agreed Jacques. “Also it is very hard sometimes.”

“Have you been in the army long?” asked Leon.

“Three years. I was quartered in Algeria for two years. For the last year I have been here in France.”

“You are in the infantry?” queried Leon.

“I was, in Algeria,” Jacques replied. “It was very hard, too; stationed on the edge of the desert where it was so hot and sometimes we had very long marches.”

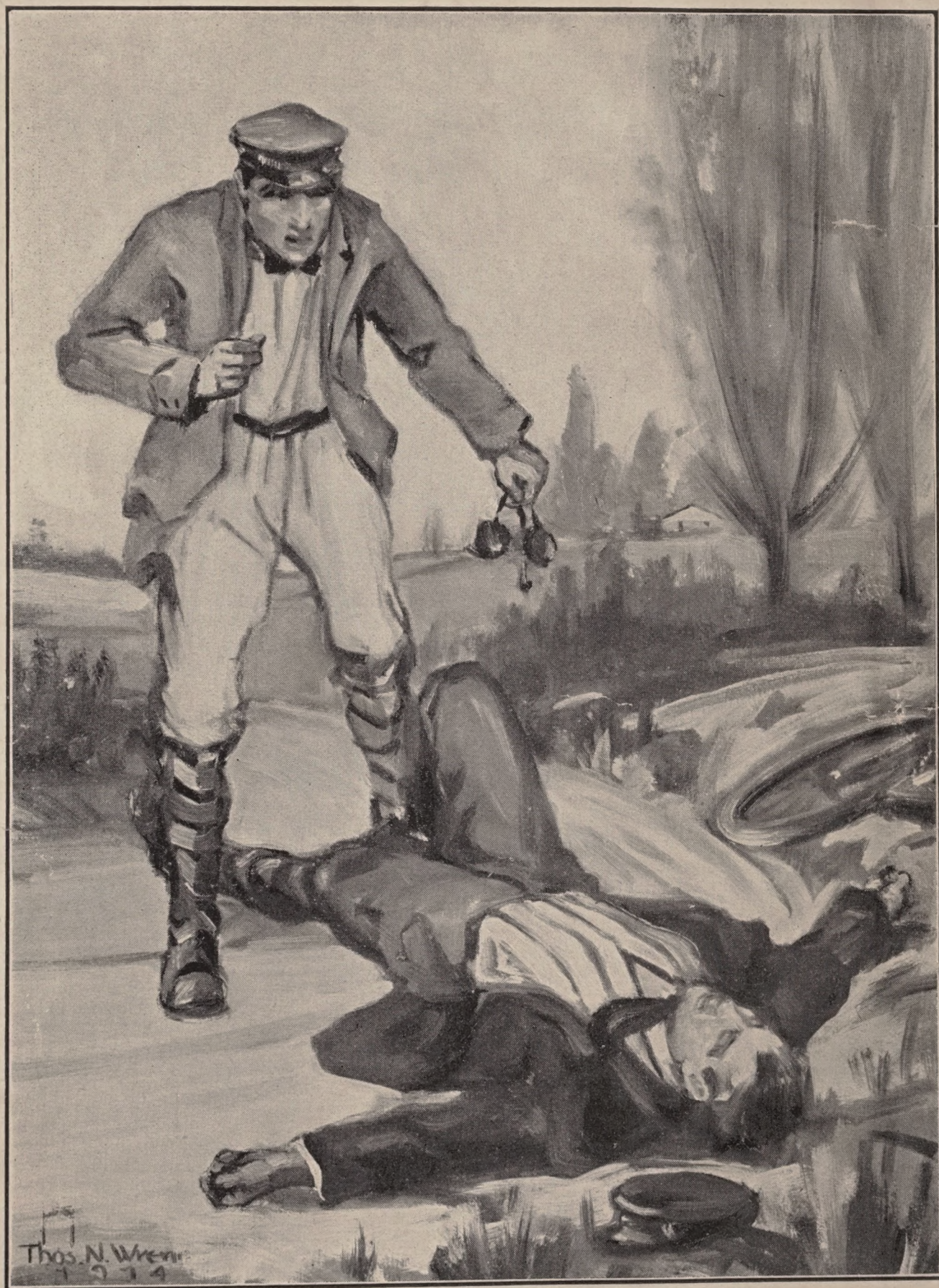
“The natives made trouble, you mean?”

“Often. We would be sent out and it was very bad fun. I did not like it one little bit.”

“You are not in the infantry any more, then?” inquired Leon.

“No, I am now in the aviation corps.”

“You are!” exclaimed Leon.



WHEN LEON OPENED HIS EYES A FEW MOMENTS LATER
HE FOUND HIMSELF LYING UNDER THE HEDGE
BY THE ROADSIDE.

“Yes, for one year I have been attached to that division. It is very interesting.”

“Well, I should think it might be! Did you ever have a fall?”

“Once, but it was not serious. We were up very high when our motor suddenly ceased running. It was exciting for a moment, but we landed in safety with only a slight bump. We what you call ‘volplaned’ down.”

“Whew!” exclaimed Leon. “Were you at the wheel at the time?”

“Yes,” said Jacques.

“And you have an aëroplane all of your own?” said Leon. “That must be wonderful.”

“It is not my own. It belongs to the Government, of course. But I always run it. I like it very much.”

“Is it a biplane?”

“No, a monoplane,” said Jacques. “Over here in this country we use mostly monoplanes, while your people in the United States prefer the biplanes.”

“Which is better?” asked Leon.

"I do not know. It is only a matter of opinion, I think. Some like one, some like the other."

"Suppose France was to have a war?" suggested Leon. "Would you be in it?"

"Why, yes, of course," said Jacques simply.

"Would you fly over forts and drop bombs down and do things like that?"

"I cannot tell, probably I would have to do things such as that. Principally I would be a scout, I think. The aviators would fly over the enemy's lines to seek out their positions and discover where they were stationed."

"Wouldn't that be wonderful!" cried Leon enthusiastically. "You'd be way up in the air where no one could shoot you."

"Perhaps not," said Jacques dubiously. "You know there are guns specially made to fire at aëroplanes."

"Is that so? Well, that makes it different, then. I can't say I'd enjoy it if I was in an aëroplane and somebody from below hit my machine with a few bullets."

"No," agreed Jacques quietly, "it would not be very pleasant."

“Have you been flying much lately?” Leon asked.

“Not a great deal, very lately. You see I am home on my furlough now. Otherwise I could not be here, and you see, if I had not been home I would not have run into you with my motor-cycle, and you would not be here at present.”

“If you hadn’t run into me, someone else would,” laughed Leon. “I’ve had a fine time at your home here anyway.”

“I am glad,” said Jacques, “and I hope we may be friends.”

“I am sure we shall be,” exclaimed Leon heartily, and he extended his hand to Jacques as he spoke. They shook hands warmly and thus began a friendship that was to be of far greater value to both the young men than either dreamed of at the time.

CHAPTER IV

THE AIR SCOUT

FOUR days more Leon remained in the little white cottage. Two days before he left he got out of bed and for an hour at a time sat quietly in the little house or on the shaded lawn. He used to take his chair out into the sunshine in front of the cottage and sit there by the hour looking at the beautiful country, playing with the friendly collie, or talking with his new friend.

Jacques he found more interesting every minute, and he soon became very fond of the young aviator. The tales he had to relate of his army life were fascinating to Leon. He enjoyed the story of the life and work in Algeria, but most of all he liked to listen to Jacques' talk of the aviation-work.

"Suppose," said Leon one day, "that France was at war with some great nation and they sent big dirigible balloons over here to attack the

cities. What would you do in your aëroplane to stop them?"

"The best thing," replied Jacques, "would be for me to run right into them. If I was going over sixty miles an hour and hit the gas bag of a balloon, you can see the balloon would not last very long."

"No," agreed Leon, "and you wouldn't last very long, either. You would be killed, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, yes, undoubtedly," said Jacques simply.

"But," protested Leon, "would you do a thing like that when you knew you would surely be killed?"

"Why, yes, if it would be of service to France. France is worth more than my life, you must know, and I should be so happy if I could feel I was doing it for my country."

"Do all your soldiers feel the same way?" asked Leon in wonderment.

"Of course," said Jacques simply. "We love France. Just see how beautiful she is," and as he spoke he waved his hand towards the green fields and the rolling hills in the background.

Leon looked in the direction Jacques indicated. France certainly was beautiful, and he thought how terrible it would be if any hostile army should ever sweep across this fertile land, spreading death and ruin on every side.

Both young men were silent for a time, busy with their thoughts. Jacques first broke the silence.

“You know we have also guns for use in aëroplanes,” he said.

“What kind of guns?”

“We have some small machine guns, which weigh but a few pounds and will fire several hundred shots a minute. If we can puncture the big gas bag of a balloon you can see that it would soon come down to the earth. Some men are very accurate in dropping bombs also.”

“How many times out of ten can a man hit what he is aiming at with a bomb?” inquired Leon.

“Well, one man at a height of eight hundred feet hit a target sixty feet in diameter twelve out of fifteen times.”

“How big were the bombs?”

“They weighed fifteen pounds each.”

“But,” protested Leon, “if you were only eight hundred feet high you would be a good mark for guns down below.”

“That is true,” agreed Jacques. “An aviator would have to fly much higher than that, and then of course his aim would not be so good. The machine would be traveling very fast also and that would make it more difficult to take good aim.”

“Let’s hope you will never have to try your skill in real war,” said Leon.

“I trust not, but we must always be ready. Being ready is a fine defense, you know.”

“Of course it is,” agreed Leon. “It must be great sport to go up in an aëroplane, too. I have never done it.”

“No? Perhaps some day I might take you up if you should care to go.”

“‘Care to go!’” cried Leon. “I should say I would care to go!”

Jacques laughed at his young friend’s enthusiasm. “Of course I should have to obtain the permission necessary,” he said. “You are sure

you would like to try it, after being almost killed right on the solid ground?"

"I'd go in a minute!" declared Leon. "When do you suppose you could take me?"

"Well," said Jacques, "my furlough is not over for ten days yet, so of course it could not be before that length of time. Perhaps in two weeks I could do it."

Leon's face fell.

"In two weeks I shall be away from this part of the country," he said disappointedly.

"You are going far?"

"To Belgium. I am going up to Brussels for a little while. I want to see the battleground of Waterloo especially, and then I expect to go over into Germany after that."

"Do you not expect to come back to Paris at all this season?" asked Jacques.

"I'm afraid not. It looks as if we would not have our ride together after all, doesn't it? I am sorry, but you were nice to ask me, just the same."

"It was nothing. I should have liked very much to take you."

“Perhaps some other summer,” said Leon. “At any rate I hope we are going to see each other again some time.”

“I think we shall,” said Jacques, “and I have a strong feeling that it will be before very long. I don’t know why I think that way, but I do. You know my old mother dreamed last night that France was going to have war. Is not that a queer thing?”

“With whom are they going to war?”

“She does not know, but she dreamed that, and this morning she believes it will happen. She is sure of it, though I hope she is wrong. I also feel sure that you and I shall meet some time soon again, though I cannot tell you my reason for being so sure.”

“Well,” laughed Leon, “I hope your mother is wrong and that you are right.”

The following day Leon bade Mr. and Mrs. Dineau and Jacques good-by and started on his journey back to Paris. His uncle and aunt had called for him in an automobile to take him away, and they found him almost entirely recovered from his accident.

“Don’t forget,” called Jacques, as the car moved away from the cottage, “I expect to see you soon again, my friend.”

“I hope you do,” cried Leon, and a moment later they were gone.

The following week Leon spent quietly in Paris, seeing some of the wonders of that great city. The wonderful view from the Eiffel Tower fascinated him, while the streets, swarming with taxi-cabs, were a never ending source of enjoyment. Soon, however, the time came for him to leave and he made ready to start on the next lap of his journey, up to Belgium.

CHAPTER V

RUMORS OF WAR

THE morning after Leon arrived in Brussels he went out to visit the battlefield of Waterloo, ten miles distant from the city. Here it was that on the 18th day of June, 1815, the great struggle that overthrew the power of Napoleon was decided.

It was easy for Leon to see that the Duke of Wellington had made a wise choice of battlefields when he had selected his position of defense. In front of the village of Mont Saint Jean extends a long chain of gently sloping hills. Behind this range of hills were posted the cavalry and reserve forces out of sight of the enemy.

“They wouldn’t have been out of sight if Napoleon had only had Jacques Dineau and his aëroplane to aid him,” thought Leon.

Napoleon’s army had been drawn up in a huge semicircle about one mile distant from the forces

of the Duke of Wellington and his allies. It was formed in two lines, the reserves in the rear.

Leon with a party of Americans had hired a guide to show them the battlefield and it was he who was telling the story of the famous battle.

In the Duke of Wellington's army were about sixty-eight thousand men, while Napoleon had a little larger force,—about seventy-one thousand. Leon heard how the French had attacked the hills again and again, only to be hurled back by the desperate resistance of the defenders. All day long the battle had raged, until, after one last desperate charge, the army of Napoleon, cut to pieces and beaten, had given up the fight and retreated.

Over fifty thousand men had perished in this great struggle, one of the greatest and most important in the history of the world. A force of Prussians under General Blücher had reënforced Wellington in the nick of time and helped greatly to accomplish the downfall of the French. The battle was important in that it was the final and crushing blow to the power of Napoleon. From

that day he was never again a menace to Europe or to the world.

“What a battle that must have been!” exclaimed Leon to a fellow-American seated next to him in the electric train on their way back to Brussels.

“Would you like to have seen it?” asked the man, turning to Leon as he spoke.

“I should say I would! I’d like to have a chance to see a big battle some day.”

“You may have a chance pretty soon.”

“What do you mean?”

“The newspaper this morning says that Austria has made certain demands on Servia and given a certain limited time in which Servia may reply to them. If the reply isn’t satisfactory, Austria will probably declare war on Servia.”

“What were Austria’s demands?” asked Leon.

“Well, you know that the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, was assassinated by a Servian, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Well, Austria demands that Servia shall

allow her to go into Serbia and punish the men responsible for the crime. Also, that Serbia must stop all agitation against the Austrians. You know the two countries are very jealous of each other."

"Yes, I know. Do you think there will be a war?"

"I'm afraid so. Serbia can't very well do what Austria demands and Austria knows it."

"When must Serbia make her reply?" asked Leon eagerly.

"Six o'clock to-night."

"And you think there'll be war if she does not do what Austria demands?"

"I'm afraid so."

"It'll be just between Austria and Serbia, won't it?"

"I don't know; perhaps every country in Europe will be drawn into it soon."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Leon.

"Just what I say. If Austria declares war on Serbia, Russia will very probably help Serbia. Then Germany will help Austria, and France will side with Russia and Serbia. If France goes into

it, England may have to help her. You see there are two big alliances in Europe, 'The Triple Alliance,' which includes Germany, Austria and Italy, and 'The Triple Entente,' which is made up of Russia, France and England. They have agreed to help each other in case a war is declared and so if one or two of them get into the fight the rest may have to follow."

"Whew!" exclaimed Leon. "That would be a real war with all those nations in it! Is there any chance of Belgium fighting?"

"No," said the man. "Belgium is a neutral country and the big nations have signed a treaty saying she is always to remain neutral."

"That's lucky. Then there is no danger in Belgium at all, is there?"

"None whatsoever. I thought you just said you'd like to see a fight though."

"I would," said Leon, "but I don't want to get caught over here in the midst of a big war. I might never be able to get home."

"Well," laughed his friend, "I wouldn't worry about it just yet. What are you planning to do, anyway?"

“I’m going over to Liège pretty soon; stay there a day or so and then go on to Berlin.”

“That’s all right. Anyway you are safe enough in Belgium and my talking about all these big countries going to war is only guesswork, you know. There may not be any war at all.”

Coming into Brussels that afternoon though, they found crowds of people collected around the newspaper bulletin boards. The latest dispatches from Vienna and Belgrade, the Austrian and Servian capitals, were being shown and the excitement was very intense.

The bulletins were in French, the language commonly spoken in Belgium, and as Leon knew but little of it, the dispatches were not of great interest to him. He stood and watched the crowds for a short time and then went back to his hotel.

The evening he spent in writing home to his parents and to his twin brother, Earl.

After he had gone to bed he lay awake for a long time thinking of war and the chances for war. It did not seem possible that all the nations in Europe would fly at one another’s throats as his friend on the train that afternoon had sug-

gested. Still he had often heard people say that it was only a question of time before such a gigantic struggle would engage all the nations of Europe. They were all jealous of one another, it was said, and the statement generally was believed to be true.

“Perhaps,” thought Leon as he fell asleep, “Jacques Dineau’s mother’s dream will come true and France will have war after all. I don’t see where I shall see him again, though.”

CHAPTER VI

WAR IS DECLARED

WHEN Leon came downstairs for breakfast the next morning the first person he saw was his American friend of the afternoon before.

“Good-morning,” exclaimed Leon. “What is the news to-day?”

“War is declared.”

“By Austria?”

“Yes. I was sure it would be.”

“Do you think Austria will win?”

“I don’t believe she would have started the war unless she felt confident of that fact,” said the American. “Austria is the larger country, you know.”

“Yes, I know. It somehow seems to me like a big boy picking on a small one.”

The man laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

“It might seem that way to us,” he admitted, “but we don’t understand it all, you know.”

“No,” said Leon, “I suppose not. At any rate I am going to see something of Belgium. It’s safe enough here.”

“Yes, you’re all right as long as you stay here,” said the man.

Leon spent the day wandering about the streets of Brussels. It is a beautiful city and attracted him strongly. One thing that always interested him very much in the European cities was the fact that so many restaurants had their tables on the sidewalks in front of the buildings. People sat out there in full view of every passer-by and enjoyed their meals or refreshments as calmly as if they were seated in the strictest privacy.

The following day Leon departed from Brussels, making his way to Liège on a bicycle he had procured. No motorcycles were to be used by him for some time yet, he decided. He stopped for luncheon at Louvain and spent the night in Tirlemont. He could easily have made much better time but he was in no hurry and he liked to ride leisurely through the country and see all there was to be seen.

From Tirlemont, a clean little city of about

twenty thousand inhabitants, he proceeded the next day to the little town of Gingelom where he had his noonday meal. Nearby he crossed the old Roman road, built by the Roman conquerors centuries before, and still in good condition.

Late that afternoon he arrived in Liège. This city caught his fancy at once. Spread out over considerable space and located on the high banks of the river Meuse, it enjoyed a splendid location.

Walking into his hotel a few days later, Leon discovered his American acquaintance who had been so friendly with him in Brussels.

“Hello, there,” exclaimed the man.

“Why, I didn’t know you were coming here,” said Leon in surprise. It was certainly good for him to have someone to talk to, though, he thought.

“I didn’t expect to. I like Liège though; I have been here several times before and I just thought I’d run over again.”

“How’s the war getting on?” asked Leon. “I’ve almost forgotten about it. I’ve been riding around the country on my bicycle and I

haven't seen any sort of a newspaper and I don't know what is happening at all."

"Well, it's about time you found out!" exclaimed the man. "I told you a lot more of the nations might be drawn in and sure enough, Russia, Servia and France are all at war with Germany and Austria now. Germany is starting to invade France."

"Is that so?" cried Leon aghast. "Why haven't I heard anything about it?"

"It has all happened so quickly, and if you were in the country districts it might easily have escaped you."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"I'm not going to do anything. Why not stay right here in Liège and see the fun? We are in a neutral country and close to things; it is almost like a grandstand seat."

"But suppose Belgium declares war on somebody along with the others?" protested Leon.

"There's not a bit of danger. Belgium will not be in this war; it is too small to get mixed up with all these big fellows. The only thing that could drag her in would be that some country

should violate her neutrality. They have signed a treaty not to do that, though."

"Well, if that's the case, I say to stay here, too," said Leon enthusiastically.

He spent the evening talking to his new friend and they discussed the war from every point of view. Leon related that his friend Jacques' mother had prophesied war and here it was already.

"But I guess his feeling that he will see me soon again was wrong," Leon continued thoughtfully.

"Perhaps he may fly over Liège or some place near here and see you then," laughed the American.

"That's his only chance, I'm afraid," said Leon. "I would like to see him again, though."

"Well, now that Germany plans to invade France I imagine your friend will be a mighty busy young man. He will be among the first to be called for duty probably."

"I suppose so," said Leon. "I don't think I envy him his contract very much, either."

"Wouldn't you like to be in a city that was at-

tacked? Just suppose the Germans should attack Liége?"

"Anybody who attacked this city would have a hard time taking it I believe," said Leon.

"Yes, indeed, they would. Just think, there are at least a dozen big forts entirely surrounding the city! They are powerful, too, and most excellently planned. Liége makes a pretty well protected city."

"The people here make weapons, don't they?" asked Leon.

"I should say they did; all kinds of them. This is a great manufacturing center, you know, and the making of weapons is one of the principal industries."

"Are the people fighters?"

"They are hard workers, but when you get them started they are still harder fighters. There have been a great many bloody fights in this old place and I guess no one has ever said that the inhabitants couldn't fight if they had to."

"Do they make guns and cannons here?"

"Yes, indeed they do, and I guess they wouldn't hesitate to use them if they should be attacked."

“Well, they won’t need them in this war, you say, and now I think I’ll go up to bed.”

“I shall join you,” said the American and they were about to start up the stairs when a commotion in front of the hotel attracted their attention.

They started to investigate when suddenly a man breathless and wild-eyed burst into the lobby of the hotel.

“Germany is invading Belgium!” he gasped.

CHAPTER VII

STRANDED

AT first no one seemed to comprehend what the man had said. People stood aghast staring blankly at one another and all appeared dazed for a few moments.

However, the instant the full meaning of what the news was dawned upon those standing near, pandemonium broke loose. Everyone seemed to be in his neighbor's way and confusion reigned on all sides.

The news spread like wildfire throughout the city and in an incredibly short time the streets were filled with the excited populace. They collected in groups on the corners, gesticulating wildly, while in front of the newspaper and telegraph offices the crowds were so dense it was almost impossible to pass through them.

People seemed dazed, and utterly unable to comprehend the real meaning of it all. Why should Germany invade their little country?

Didn't she sign a solemn treaty never to violate Belgium's neutrality?

"What is going to happen?" demanded Leon of his friend. All thought of bed had vanished from their minds and they were now on the street in the midst of the crowd, seeking for news as eagerly as all the others.

"I don't know," replied the man. "One thing is sure though in my mind, and that is that the Belgians will not sit still and let Germany parade through their territory."

"Why does Germany want to come into Belgium, anyway?" demanded Leon.

"My opinion is that they think this is the shortest and easiest cut to Paris. Paris, of course, is the spot they are aiming for, and they consider the approach through Belgium about the easiest."

"Have they any right to cross a neutral country's territory, though?"

"Well," replied the American, "when a big country is at war, I don't imagine it stops very long to consider whether it has a right to do a thing or not. Another reason why they are coming through here is this: France expects Ger-

many to live up to the terms of her treaty and so naturally they have never fortified their Belgian border very much. They considered there was no need of it. Germany knows all this and consequently they figure that this is the route with the fewest forts and the least opposition."

"They're about right, too, aren't they?"

"Unless Belgium puts up a stiff fight. A large number of the Belgian cities are heavily fortified and are capable of offering desperate resistance."

"But you don't really think little Belgium will think of opposing Germany, do you?" said Leon in amazement.

"Yes, I think she will. I don't see how they can very well do anything else."

"What about us?" demanded Leon. "Hadn't we better get out of here?"

"I was just thinking of that and I guess we had. If we don't leave now we may not be able to get away later and I don't think we ought to take any more chances than are necessary."

"Let's hurry back to the hotel and pack up then," exclaimed Leon.

Making their way with difficulty through the

throngs on the street they arrived at their hotel once more. It had been hard work and exciting, and both were nearly fagged out when they arrived there.

Coming into the lobby of the hotel Leon turned to his friend.

“Where shall we go?” he asked.

“To Brussels, first. We can decide what to do after that when we reach there.”

“There is a train to-night all right, isn’t there?”

“I suppose so. Wait here and I’ll inquire at the desk.”

Leon stood watching the crowds, while his friend consulted the hotel clerk. People hurrying past him looked worried and anxious, but determined. He decided that once aroused they would not give up the fight unless it was absolutely hopeless. He wondered at the bravery of such people, in even considering opposition to the great army of the Kaiser. They would not stand even the slightest chance against them, no matter how brave they were. The numbers against them were far too great.

Just then his American friend returned.

"No trains to-night," he announced.

"What!" exclaimed Leon. "You mean to say we can't get out of Liège to-night even if we want to?"

"Exactly. No trains will run to-night, but there will doubtless be some in the morning though the ticket seller said he could not guarantee anything."

"Well, we're in a pretty fix," said Leon soberly. "For all we know Liège may be attacked at any minute and we can't leave."

"I don't think we need worry yet though," said the American reassuringly. "We'll be able to get away all right in the morning."

"I hope so. This report may be no joke for us."

"Yes," agreed the man, "you are right there. No one would harm us though, being Americans, and we'll soon be away from here."

"What shall we do now?" asked Leon.

"We may as well go to bed. We can pack all our belongings to-night and be ready for an early start in the morning. What do you say?"

“That sounds like an excellent plan to me,” said Leon. “Let’s start now.”

They soon left the din and hubbub of the streets and the lobby and retired to their rooms where the task of packing up their belongings speedily began.

Leon had very little luggage, only two bags, but they contained many things he had collected on his trip and he had no desire to lose them. He was determined to hold on to his baggage at all costs.

His packing finished, he clambered into bed, but sleep seemed far away. The events of the evening had aroused him tremendously and he seemed unable to quiet down. The faint murmur of the streets made its way dimly to his ears and his brain worked busily over all the possibilities of what might happen.

Once, getting out of bed and going to the window, he looked down and saw a squad of soldiers marching through the street. Silent and grim they appeared and the sight of them sent little shivers chasing each other up and down his spine.

It was a long time before Leon could get the

sight of the marching troops out of his mind, and when at length he did fall asleep, he dreamed he could hear the roar of the German siege guns bombarding the fortifications around the city.

CHAPTER VIII

REFUGEES

BRIGHT and early the next morning Leon made his way downstairs, a bag in each hand. His American friend was before him, however, awaiting his arrival in the lobby.

“There is a train leaving in about twenty minutes,” he announced to Leon as soon as he caught sight of him. “I just found it out and was starting up to waken you.”

“That’s the train we want, isn’t it?” said Leon at once.

“I want it, and if you do, come along and we’ll make a try for it.”

Paying his hotel bill as quickly as he was able in the confusion, Leon grasped his two bags and hurriedly followed his friend out into the street. If anything, the crowds seemed even denser than in the previous evening, so that fast walking was out of the question. The people appeared quieter

than they had been the night before, but they also appeared more determined.

“Do you think we’ll make it?” gasped Leon, panting under the weight he was carrying.

“I guess so. We’re almost there now.”

In a few moments they arrived at the Station des Guillemins, where the trains left for Paris. The place was packed and jammed with a dense mass of humanity which extended even out into the street. It appeared to the two hurrying Americans that even to enter the station would be impossible.

“Do you think we can do it?” said Leon.

“No, I don’t, but we want to make a hard try for it.”

The crowd was made up of all classes and kinds of people, all seemingly possessed with the same idea of reaching the train. Leon and his friend were soon in the thick of the press, attempting to force their way through it.

It was of no use. Long before they even came within sight of the train they were seeking, the bell clanged and they heard the train pulling out. They stood still and stared blankly at each other.

“Well, we missed it,” said Leon simply.

“You are quite right,” agreed his friend, trying to assume an indifferent attitude.

“What next?” demanded Leon.

“You didn’t have any breakfast this morning, did you?”

“None at all.”

“Neither did I. What do you say to having some breakfast and talking things over?”

“The idea of breakfast sounds first class to me,” Leon assented. “But what about a train for Brussels? Don’t you think we ought to inquire about that first?”

“Yes, I guess we had. Let’s go over to the ticket-window.”

It was no easy task to reach it, however. The crowd was still great, especially around the spot they were striving to reach. In the throng were many tourists and foreigners, men, women and children, all bent upon leaving Liège at the earliest possible moment. Many of the people appeared to be greatly worried, and not a few women were in tears. Some had been somewhat roughly

handled by the crowd, for although it was not disorderly it was determined, and every person was looking out for himself at all times.

At length they reached the window, and learned that the next scheduled train would not leave for two hours. They were told in addition that they might not be able to board it, and also that no baggage could be carried.

“I don’t want to abandon my bags,” said Leon as they made their way out of the station.

“Nor I,” exclaimed his friend. “We’ll decide what to do while we are having breakfast.”

They hastened to a nearby restaurant and seated themselves at a small table overlooking the street. Both were very hungry after their long exertions and felt the lack of food keenly.

It was almost impossible to secure anything to eat, however. The waiters appeared absolutely demoralized; they stood talking and gesticulating to one another in little groups, and paid but scant attention to customers. On all sides the question of war was being discussed. At frequent intervals squads of soldiers trooped past, while the crowds

along the sidewalk cheered them lustily. All this excitement did not help in any way to provide breakfast for two hungry Americans.

A waiter was finally secured, however, and by means of a generous fee was bribed into bringing some food for the two hungry guests.

“Do you really think we stand any chance of getting aboard that train?” asked Leon.

“I’m not very cheerful about it, to tell the truth. How else can we travel, though?”

“What about a horse?”

“You mean to hire one?”

“Yes.”

“Where can you hire a horse around here?”

“I’m sure I don’t know,” said Leon, “but it was the first thing that occurred to me.”

The waiter was standing near. He spoke very good English and now joined in the conversation.

“Pardon, Monsieur,” he said. “Did I hear Monsieur say that he wishes to hire a horse?”

“Yes,” said Leon quickly. “Do you know where we can get hold of one?”

“I am not sure, Monsieur. My brother has a

horse he might consent to allow you to have. Where is it that Monsieur wishes to go?"

"To Brussels."

"Ah, that is very far for a horse to go," said the waiter in a doubtful tone.

"But yet," he added a moment later, "I have an uncle who lives in Brussels. Perhaps you might leave the horse with him."

"Yes, that's a fine idea!" exclaimed the American enthusiastically. "You see we want to reach Brussels and we can't take our baggage on the train. We don't want to leave it here, so we'll drive all the way if necessary. I wish you could manage it with your brother to let us have his horse. We will take good care of it."

"No doubt Monsieur would pay my brother well also?" asked the waiter.

"You needn't worry about that. We'll pay a good big price and in advance, too."

Their waiter went off in search of his brother, who lived not far away. The two stranded Americans remained seated in the restaurant anxiously awaiting his return. Matters were fast becoming

serious, and they decided they ought to seize the first means of transportation out of the city that they could lay hands upon. At present a horse and carriage appeared to be the best method of travel.

“There he is now!” exclaimed Leon suddenly, a short time later.

A horse attached to a light wagon had just drawn up at the curb outside the restaurant. The waiter was seated in the wagon along with another man, evidently his brother.

Leon and his friend went out to talk to them at once, and it did not take long to arrange a bargain. Leon’s new friend seemed to be well supplied with money and he did not argue over terms. He had laughingly refused Leon’s offer to pay his share and insisted that this was all his own party.

“The horse is a little nervous, Monsieur,” warned their friend, the waiter, when the two refugees were seated in the wagon. “You must drive him much carefully.”

“Don’t worry about us,” laughed the American, who held the reins. “We’ll be all right.”

He chirruped to the horse and they started off, their bags snugly tucked away under the seat.

“This is a lark, isn’t it?” exclaimed Leon.

“It certainly is. I’m having a fine time so far.”

If the two travelers had only known what was in store for them before they came to their journey’s end it is doubtful if they would have started off in such high spirits.

CHAPTER IX

A NEW MISFORTUNE

THE two Americans had inquired carefully as to the road they were to follow. The owner of their horse had instructed them as clearly as he was able, and they felt confident they would have no difficulty in finding their way.

Down through the crowded streets of the city they drove, making but slow progress on account of the throngs of people that swarmed everywhere. Several times they were stopped by soldiers or gendarmes and not allowed to proceed until they had satisfactorily explained their business.

Past the citadel they went out into the open country. Forts, solid and stern, looked frowningly down upon them. The defenses guarded the approaches to the city and seemed to be in especially good locations to sweep the river.

“Imagine trying to cross the Meuse in a boat, with these forts up above you,” said Leon to his friend.

“I don’t like to think of such things. No man would stand a chance.”

“Well, we’re out of it now anyway. Do you really think they are going to fight?”

“I do, and Liège will be the first place attacked. Why, before we left there I heard rumors that war had already been declared by Belgium.”

“Is that so?” exclaimed Leon. “It shows good nerve on her part at any rate.”

“There is nothing else to do. You’d do the same thing under the circumstances.”

“Yes, I guess I would,” agreed Leon, his eyes flashing. “I hate to have anyone make a goat of me.”

“Belgium always seems to be the goat. You know on the Belgian coat-of-arms there is a lion; it is a fierce looking beast, rearing up on its hind legs. Now I think I’ll suggest to King Albert that he have the lion changed to a goat. Don’t you think that under the circumstances that animal would be more appropriate?”

Leon laughed heartily at this.

“That’s a good idea, all right,” he agreed.

"But I don't believe your suggestion would be adopted."

"No," said his friend, "I'm afraid not. I like Belgium, though, and it makes me mad to see her picked on. It has always been just that way."

"Why is it?"

"Well, Belgium is unfortunate enough to be situated right in the midst of several big nations. When these big nations go to war with one another they always seem to pick her out as the battleground."

"It is hard luck, isn't it?" said Leon. "I suppose that Belgium is usually drawn into it, too."

"Yes, the Belgians can't very well help it."

At this moment they came to a fork in the road. Two highways joined here, one leading to the left and the other to the right.

"Which is our road?" asked the driver, reining in his horse. "Do you recognize this place from the directions we received?"

"No, I don't," said Leon. "I should say we ought to go to the left, though."

"I should take the right hand road," said his friend confidently.

“Well,” laughed Leon, “what are we going to do about it? It seems to me Brussels must be right off in that direction.”

He pointed to their left.

“I don’t think so,” insisted his companion. “I’m sure it’s the other way.”

“As there are no sign posts and no one to ask, how shall we decide?” said Leon.

“You think you’re right, and I’m sure I’m right. Let’s toss up a coin; if it comes heads up we go your way and if it comes up tails we go mine. What do you say?”

“I’m agreeable. I’d hate to get on the wrong road, though.”

“Suppose we do. We’ll meet some one before long and we can inquire. If we’re wrong we can easily turn back.”

“All right,” agreed Leon. “Toss your coin.”

His friend drew a bright new franc piece out of his pocket and with his thumb sent it spinning into the air. As it came down he caught it with one hand and slapped it onto the back of his other hand, still covering it with his palm, however.

“What do you think it is?” he asked, turning to Leon.

“I think it’s heads, of course.”

His friend removed his hand. There lay the franc, head down on the back of his hand.

“You win,” laughed Leon. “I guess the road you selected is the right one after all.”

“Let’s hope so.”

He slapped the horse with the reins and once more they took up their journey.

“What time is it?” inquired Leon a few moments later.

“Half-past three,” replied his friend, consulting his watch. “I had no idea it was as late as that, did you?”

“No, I didn’t. How far have we come from Liège? Not very far, I think.”

“Not over ten miles, I should say as a guess. How did the time pass so quickly?”

“Well,” said Leon, “we were a long time getting out of the city. We didn’t start very early either.”

“Now that I know it is as late as that I am beginning to feel hungry,” laughed his friend. “Do

you suppose we can get lunch anywhere around here?"

"There's a farmhouse ahead. We might stop there and see what there is to be had."

A little white farmhouse, nestled in a clump of trees, stood back from the road about a quarter of a mile ahead of them. In a large field nearby two small boys were flying a kite. It soared high in the air and must have been of good size and possessed of a strong pull, judging by the way the two boys tugged at the cord they were holding.

"That's great fun," exclaimed Leon's friend, gazing up at the kite. "I remember how I used to enjoy that, and I had some fine kites, too."

As he spoke the kite suddenly dipped and wobbled uncertainly. It began to fall rapidly, reeling and swerving in its flight.

"The cord broke, I guess," observed Leon.

This evidently was the trouble and the two boys, waving their arms and gesticulating wildly, started in hurried pursuit of their toy. It was a huge red kite and had evidently consumed much labor in its making, for its owners undoubtedly

were very much worried over the fate now threatening it.

“Why, it’s coming right at us!” Leon exclaimed a moment later.

“It certainly is!” cried his friend. “We don’t want it to hit us, either.”

“Stop the horse!” exclaimed Leon. “I think it will go in front.”

His companion followed his advice and reined in sharply. Meanwhile the huge red runaway came lunging awkwardly in their direction. No man alive could have prophesied its exact course, so varied was it. It seemed, however, that it would pass in front of the wagon, as Leon had said. Closer and closer to the ground it came and nearer and nearer to the horse and wagon.

Breathless, the two Americans watched its approach.

It seemed safely past when suddenly it turned and shot towards them. So quickly did it come that it was impossible to dodge out of its way.

It struck their horse full on the head and impaled itself on one of the shafts, entangling the horse’s fore-feet in its meshes.

The startled animal gave one loud snort. Then he jumped, and a moment later was racing at full speed down the road, a hopeless runaway.

CHAPTER X

THE INVADERS APPEAR

SO suddenly did all this take place that neither Leon nor his friend fully realized what was taking place until they found themselves speeding along the road.

“Grab the lines! Quick!” shouted Leon.

His friend did not need this advice, for the first thing he tried to do was to regain possession of the reins which had been so abruptly jerked from his hands.

“I’ve got them!” he exclaimed. “But the horse doesn’t seem to want to stop!”

He tugged and pulled with all his might and main, but the frightened animal merely increased his speed. Along the road he raced, while the light wagon rocked and swayed, threatening to upset at any minute. For at least a quarter of a mile they almost seemed to fly over the ground. The kite was still directly over the horse’s head, looking like a huge collar about his neck.

The sight would have been ludicrous if it had not been so serious. The small boys who owned the kite ran after the wagon, shouting in their loudest tones, but they were soon outdistanced and gave up the chase.

Leon and his companion sat in the wagon, hanging on as if for dear life, and seemed in immediate danger of being thrown out at any minute.

“This can’t last long,” said Leon grimly.

“No,” said his friend, “it can’t. The horse doesn’t seem to feel the pull on the reins at all. My arms ache, they are so tired from holding him.”

He panted from his exertions, while his face was set and pale. To both the occupants of the wagon it seemed as if they had ridden for hours behind the runaway. It was only a few moments, however, and the ride ended as abruptly as it began.

The horse was wild with fear and showed not the least signs of slackening his pace. It was evident that he would run until he was forced to stop from sheer exhaustion. Suddenly one of the shafts snapped off short. The jerking and con-

stant zig-zagging from side to side had proved too great a strain upon it.

The one remaining shaft did not last long after the first accident and it too soon broke.

The horse, released from its load, sped on down the road, while the wagon swerved off to one side and came to a sudden stop in a near-by ditch.

Leon and his friend sat quietly in the wagon and watched their horse disappear from sight in a cloud of dust. Neither one spoke for some time, and then with one accord they turned and looked at each other.

“Well,” said Leon in a matter-of-fact tone, “here we are again.”

“Yes,” agreed his friend, heaving a great sigh. “Here we are again.”

“At least we are nearer Brussels than we were this morning,” said Leon. “That is something to be thankful for.”

“We’re stuck now, though. Our horse is gone and we are miles from a railroad or any other means of travel. I guess we’ll have to walk.”

“How about the horse? We must find him again and see that his owner gets him back.”

“How are you going to find him?”

“Don’t ask me that,” laughed Leon. “He may be in Brussels right now; at any rate, he was traveling fast when we last saw him. I don’t think it would take him very long to get there.”

“I don’t care about the horse, I’m worried about ourselves. I’ll pay the man all the animal is worth and be thankful that my neck isn’t broken; I don’t care much about runaways.”

“How long shall we sit here?”

“That’s just the point; I don’t know what to do. Perhaps we can go back to that farmhouse and hire another horse; we might find the first one down the road somewhere. One thing is sure, and that is that I am not going to walk after him.”

“Let’s go back to the farmhouse then,” said Leon, climbing out of the wagon as he spoke. “Do you think we ought to take our bags with us?”

“I do.”

“All right, then; we’d better get started, as it will be dark before long.”

“I know it, and we must find some place to spend the night.”

“Perhaps the farmer back yonder will let us stay over night with him,” suggested Leon.

“Maybe. We’ll see about that when we get there.”

They at once removed their bags from the wagon and started back down the road. Both felt discouraged and worried over their plight. The bags were heavy and the day was hot; the constant anxiety over the war and the fear that they might be caught in it kept their spirits low.

They arrived at the farmhouse to find a very excited household. No one there spoke English, but as Leon’s friend knew French very well he had no trouble conversing with the Belgian peasants. The farmer and his two sons were busy shining and oiling their guns. The news that the German army, on its attempted march to Paris, had invaded their fair little country had already reached them, and they were preparing to resist the advance to the best of their ability.

At first they regarded the two Americans with suspicion. They had not seen the runaway and consequently did not know from what direction the two new arrivals had come.

A short conversation in French took place between the farmer and Leon's friend. The situation was explained to the farmer and he readily consented that the two refugees should spend the night at his house. He would not loan them a horse for the reason that he had none at the present time. He had sold one only a week before and his other had died of the colic that very morning.

Besides the three men in the family, there were two women, the farmer's wife and his daughter, a girl of about sixteen. They were in terror because of the invasion and every minute they seemed to expect the Germans to arrive.

"We'd better spend the night here, I think," said Leon's friend to him after he had his talk with the farmer. "This man seems willing that we should, and for my part I have had enough for one day."

"So have I," agreed Leon heartily. "I am a Jonah anyway, I think. Ever since I have been abroad this summer I have had things happening to me. I hope my luck will change now for a while."

“Well, I don’t think anything can happen to us here to-night. Even if the Germans should come through here they wouldn’t harm an innocent farmhouse and its occupants.”

“No, I guess we’re safe enough here,” said Leon. “You don’t think there will be German troops along here so soon anyway, do you?”

“I don’t know, but I wouldn’t be surprised. I don’t believe the Belgians could offer much resistance to the great horde that will swarm through the country. The German army ought to travel fast.”

The two Americans had been shown to a small room in the front of the house, on the second floor and under the eaves. It was very cozy and clean and promised a good night’s rest. To Leon it was a delight to spend the night in a house like this and he considered it an experience that most people would never have. They were changing their clothes and preparing for supper when Leon’s friend suddenly rushed to the window.

“What’s the matter?” inquired Leon.

“S-sh, do you hear anything?”

Leon listened attentively for a moment.

“Yes, I hear something,” he said. “It sounds to me like thunder. Is it raining?”

“No, it isn’t raining, and that isn’t thunder you hear, either! That’s artillery!”

“What!” exclaimed Leon, his face becoming pale. “Do you mean to say those are guns we hear?”

“They certainly are. There is not the least doubt in the world of it.”

“Then the war has started here in earnest, and we are in it,” said Leon excitedly.

“It looks that way.”

A commotion downstairs drew their attention just at that moment. People seemed to be rushing about, and frequent exclamations of excitement and calls were heard.

The two Americans hurried down to learn the cause of it all and found the household in an uproar.

“What is it?” inquired Leon’s friend of the farmer in French.

“The Germans! The Germans!” the old man cried in the same language he had previously used, and as he spoke he pointed to the window.

Hastening to the window Leon peered out. The highway was filled with troops of cavalry making their way down the road at a fast trot. One of the farmer's sons looked over his shoulder.

"Uhlans," he muttered in an awestruck whisper.

CHAPTER XI

A FIGHT STARTS

THE word seemed to be the symbol of all that was terrible to the Belgian peasants. The women huddled in one corner of the main room and watched the men in wide-eyed terror.

The Uhlans, the pick and pride of the German cavalry, were in large force and were evidently the advance guard of a stronger body to follow. When they reached the lane leading up to the farmhouse the leaders halted. A consultation took place and the question of going into the house was evidently being debated.

Inside the house, this proceeding was being watched with feverish interest. The farmer and his two sons each held a rifle in his hands, while with set, determined faces they watched the invaders and fingered their weapons nervously.

“I advise you not to use those guns,” said

Leon's companion. "Even if they do come into the house here, you'd better sit still and make no trouble for them."

"Do you think I will sit quietly by and watch them lay waste my farm?" retorted the farmer with blazing eyes.

"I know," said the American, "but how can you help it? They haven't done any damage yet, anyway. Even if they do, you must not fire on them. It would mean practically certain death for you and your two sons."

The farmer muttered something under his breath, but made no audible answer. He did not give the appearance, however, of meaning to follow his guest's advice.

Leon had kept his gaze fixed intently on the cavalry in the road. He estimated there must be at least three hundred of them, a scouting party evidently. All the time he could hear the far off booming of the guns, a fact which, together with the soldiers outside, kept forcibly in his mind his realization that war was being waged and, that too right near where he was.

The Uhlans were splendid looking men, large

and mounted on superb horses. They were once more on the move now, though Leon noticed that one of the men who had been at the head of the column had drawn his horse to one side of the road, and was evidently waiting to deliver some message to those in the rear.

They jogged along, a cloud of dust rising all about them as they advanced over the road. The sight of them and the clatter of their horses' hoofs sent chills racing up and down Leon's spine. They certainly presented an imposing sight.

At last the rear of the column came up even with the lane. The trooper halted beside the road, gave some order in a loud voice and twelve of the Uhlans fell out of line and came to a full stop. The rest of the division kept on down the road at an undiminished pace. The twelve men who had remained behind wheeled their horses, and following the officer who had given them the orders, started up the lane toward the farmhouse.

A low exclamation of horror by the farmer's wife was the only recognition of this move by the watchers inside. The men sat still and in grim

silence awaited the arrival of the Uhlans. The farmer and his two sons still gripped their rifles tightly and a few low-toned words were exchanged between them.

Leon's friend had been observing them attentively and now he turned to the farmer.

"I beg of you to put away your guns," he exclaimed earnestly. "They will only get you into trouble, and you must think of your wife and daughter. When the Germans arrive at the house go and see what they desire. Their errand may be a peaceable one and you must not make any show of arms."

His tone and voice were so sincere that the farmer was plainly affected by it.

"Perhaps you are right," he said. "For the present I shall lay aside my gun."

He quickly placed it in a closet and his sons followed his example. No sooner had he shut the door than there was a loud knocking at the rear of the house. The Germans were seeking admittance.

"Be very careful when you talk to them, please," begged Leon's friend, as the farmer has-

tened to answer the summons. "Don't do or say a thing to make them angry."

A second and more insistent knocking was heard, then came the sound of bolts being removed. A moment later a German officer strode into the room where all the household was assembled. The farmer followed close behind.

No one said a word or moved as the German surveyed the little gathering. The officer looked over everyone from head to foot and then turned to the farmer.

"Who are those two?" he asked, pointing to Leon and his friend. He spoke in German, a language with which the farmer seemed to be perfectly familiar. In fact, since he had been in Belgium, Leon had observed that practically everyone seemed to be thoroughly familiar with two or three languages.

"They are Americans," explained the farmer, speaking in the same language in which he had been addressed.

The officer laughed suspiciously.

"More like English spies," he muttered.

"No, no," protested the farmer, and he began

to explain how the two Americans happened to be in his house. The officer appeared not to believe the story at first, but at the mention of the runaway and how the horse had disappeared down the road, he changed his manner.

“We found that horse,” he said shortly.

“And then my American guests may have him back again?” said the farmer quickly.

“I think not,” said the officer with an ugly laugh. “We need horses and we’ll keep that one.”

“But my friends only hired him. He does not belong to them.”

“What difference is that to me? We want him and we’ll keep him. I want your horses, too.”

“I have none,” protested the farmer. He was beginning to lose control of his temper and the two Americans watched him nervously. They could not understand what was being said, but they inferred that it concerned them and were consequently anxious. They saw the officer’s manner and feared that if the farmer became too excited he might suffer for it.

“A likely story,” sneered the Uhlan when he

heard the farmer say he had no horses. "We shall see for ourselves. And don't make any trouble," he warned as he stamped out of the room, his spurs jangling at the heels of his well polished, though somewhat dusty boots.

"He has gone for my horses," exclaimed the farmer, laughing nervously. "He will be fooled."

"They may seize our cattle," said one of his sons.

"If they do—" snarled the farmer, making an involuntary step toward the closet as he spoke.

"Keep cool," exclaimed Leon's friend, springing to his feet and catching the excited peasant by the sleeve. "Let them take the cattle or anything they want, but don't make any trouble."

"That's what he told me as he went out," said the farmer, "but I'll show him if he touches my property."

"What did he say to you?" asked Leon's friend.

The farmer repeated the conversation.

"He thought we were English spies, did he? Well, we're not, and we can prove it to him if he wants us to."

“I think he suspects you no longer,” said the farmer. “What I fear now is that he may be stealing my cattle.”

He hurried out of the room in the direction the officer had taken. The others remained quietly where they were, thinking it the wisest course to remain out of sight if possible.

Leon heard how he had been suspected of being a spy and was much amused by the report. He was not one who had much knowledge of what it meant to be nervous or afraid. He was thinking what a fine story it all would make when he reached home, and then a commotion outside drew the attention of himself and of all the others present.

Passing by the side of the house was the little squad of Uhlans. In front of them they were driving four fine well-fed cows. The distracted farmer was frantically trying to head them off while the Germans laughed at him, at the same time preventing him from accomplishing his purpose.

Finally they seemed to tire of this amusement. The officer called out something in a harsh voice

to the farmer. It was evidently an order to desist, but it had no effect.

Seeing this, the officer drew his sword and struck the farmer sharply across the head with the flat side of it. It felled him like a log, while the troopers laughed and continued their way, still driving the cattle before them.

The peasant lay on the ground for but a second, however. He sprang to his feet almost instantly and shaking his fist at his enemies he dashed into the house. Straight for the closet where his gun was he went.

Leon's friend in alarm tried to stop him, but to no avail; he was brushed aside like a fly. The terror-stricken wife and daughter also pleaded with him, but in vain; he paid absolutely no attention to any of them.

He seized his own gun and also handed one to each of his eager sons, who were nearly as wrought up as their father. Giving their guns a hasty glance the three Belgians rushed out of the house. Hurrying to the front they all three knelt and raising their rifles took careful aim at the figures of the Uhlans disappearing down the lane.

CHAPTER XII

A FRESH DISASTER

IT was an anxious moment for the two Americans and the women who were left in the house. There was not a doubt that the action of the farmer and his two sons would bring a swift and awful punishment upon them.

“The fools!” muttered Leon’s friend as he saw what the three men intended to do. “They’ll bring those Uhlans back on us like a swarm of angry bees. This place may not be safe for you or me in two minutes.”

Before Leon had a chance to reply, three shots rang out in quick succession. The enraged peasants had fired and it was now too late to do anything but await the consequences of their rash act.

Peering down the lane, Leon saw one of the rear horsemen throw up his hands and waver unsteadily in his seat. Two of his comrades quickly

grasped him about the waist to support him while he lay limply in their arms.

The rest of the squad wheeled sharply and with an angry shout started at full speed up the lane again. Once more the three peasants fired and this time two more Uhlans reeled in their saddles and fell. The rest swept on at undiminished speed and as if nothing had happened out of the ordinary. They fired as they came a little nearer and one bullet flying wide of its mark shattered the glass in the window over Leon's head. A shower of it fell all about him, but fortunately he was unhurt.

Once again the peasants fired and this time the horse on which the officer rode was struck. He pitched forward violently, sending his rider headlong. After this volley the Belgians turned and ran. They dodged behind trees and finally rounding the corner of the house disappeared from the sight of the pursuers.

The Uhlans had stopped momentarily to look after their dismounted commander. He was instantly on his feet again, however, and hoarsely shouting commands he led the pursuit on foot.

There were only eight Uhlans in the squad now, but they were enraged and ready to vent their anger on the first peasant they could find.

Around the corner of the house they sped and a volley of shots showed that they had located the three men.

“They’ll kill them, sure!” whispered Leon to his friend.

“Of course they will. They’ll shoot them down like dogs and there is no telling what else they may decide to do.”

“Do you think we’d better run for it?”

“If we do and they see us, we’ll be shot, too. That officer was suspicious of us anyway, and we don’t want to make him any more so. The best thing we can do is to stay right where we are.”

“Think of the poor farmer and his sons!” exclaimed Leon. “They may be dead by this time.”

“They brought it on themselves. I warned them, you know, and the people I feel sorry for are this woman and her daughter.”

The two women sat huddled close together, their hands tightly clasped and their eyes wide with horror. They seemed unable to comprehend what

was taking place and at the slightest noise they would start in terror. For several moments there had been no firing. Suddenly a volley of shots rang out, apparently coming from some place in the rear of the house.

A moment later there was a clatter of hoofs and five Uhlans galloped past the window where Leon was seated. They picked up their comrades who had fallen and carried them off down the lane. As far as Leon could see one of the men was dead and the other badly wounded.

“Where do you suppose the others are?” asked Leon, turning to his friend.

“I don’t know, but I guess the poor Belgian farmer and his sons have paid the penalty for their rash act.”

“Shall we go outside?”

“By no means. Stay where you are.”

“I think we ought to find out what has happened to our friends, don’t you?”

“What can we do for them? Don’t forget that all the Germans haven’t left yet, and we’d better lie low until they go.”

There was a commotion outside at that moment,

and the German officer came stalking into the room, followed by three of his men. His face was livid with rage and he shook his fist at the two Americans and the two women, all the time talking in a loud voice. No one could understand what he was saying, but it was an anxious moment for all concerned.

Finally he seemed to give some order and his men started toward the two American refugees.

"I guess we're to be arrested," said Leon's friend in a low voice.

Evidently the officer suddenly changed his mind, however. He gave a short, sharp command, the soldiers wheeled and, headed by their officer, marched out of the house.

The two women had not once moved while all these events were taking place. They seemed to be paralyzed with fear and merely sat staring hopelessly straight ahead of them. No one of the four people left in the house made any move to leave and for some time they all waited in silence.

The Uhlans galloping past the window, roused them from their lethargy. Leon watched the

riders as they disappeared down the lane and into the dusk.

“They’ve all gone,” said Leon finally.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, I counted them; there were two on one horse, the officer and one of his men. I guess his horse must have been killed.”

“Thank heaven they have left! I was nervous for a while there. Now we’d better go out and see if we can find our three friends. I don’t know what to do about these two women.”

“Leave them alone,” said Leon. “There is nothing you can do for them. Come on, let’s go out.”

He sprang to his feet and started toward the door. His friend followed an instant later, only to run squarely into Leon on his way back.

“The house is on fire!” cried Leon.

Even as he spoke the smoke began rolling into the doorway where they were standing.

“Get the women out!” exclaimed Leon.

They hurried into the sitting room yelling “Fire” in their loudest tones. The women did not understand what they were saying, but

they quickly realized that something momentous was happening. The two Americans seized the woman and her daughter by their arms and half dragged them to their feet and then led them out of the room. The smoke was rolling in in a dense cloud now and it was desperate work getting the women out of doors.

Once there they rubbed the smoke out of their eyes, and, looking about them, for the first time Leon and his friend realized that not only was the house on fire, but the barns and all the other outbuildings were burning as well.

The flames had progressed too far for there to be any possibility of putting them out now, and already the sky began to glow with the glare of the conflagration.

CHAPTER XIII

A NIGHT IN THE OPEN

THEY stood helplessly, watching the fire.
“Our bags!” exclaimed Leon suddenly.
“They are in the house and we must get them!”

He started to run swiftly toward the blazing building, but his friend caught him by his arm and held him firmly.

“Don’t be foolish, my boy,” he urged. “Just look at that blaze; there isn’t a chance that you would ever come out alive. Forget the bags.”

“But all my belongings are in them.”

“You are no worse off than I am.”

“We’re absolutely stranded,” protested Leon.

“I know it,” said his friend calmly, “but it won’t do us any good to worry about it.”

“Where shall we spend the night? How shall we reach Brussels? How shall we get anything to eat?”

Leon fired a volley of questions at his friend.

"I don't know any more about it than you do," replied that individual. "The first thing, it seems to me, is to look for our three Belgian friends."

"That's right," exclaimed Leon, instantly forgetting his own troubles. "Where are the women?" he cried, suddenly glancing around him.

They had disappeared completely and without even being noticed.

"That's a queer thing," said Leon's friend. "Let's look over by the barn."

They made their way in that direction and met the women coming toward them. Both were weeping and as they came up to the two Americans they pointed toward the blazing barn. The mother held up three fingers.

"She means the three men are in that fire!" said Leon. "You don't suppose they were burned alive, do you?" he cried in horror.

"Oh, no, I can't believe that. Probably they ran into the barn and the Germans shot them there. Then they set the building on fire."

"That makes my blood boil!" exclaimed Leon

hotly. "They had no right to do such a thing!"

"Don't forget that the farmer and his sons started the row," said his friend.

"No, they didn't," protested Leon. "Didn't the Germans start off with their cattle first? Would you sit quietly by and let someone treat your property that way? You know you wouldn't, neither would I and neither would anyone who has a drop of red blood in his veins. Things like that make me furious; I tell you I side with the Belgians so far, and many more things like this would almost make me enlist."

"You certainly seem excited about it," said his friend, looking at Leon in amazement.

"I am. I can understand exactly how that farmer felt when they started off with his cattle. I'd have done the same thing that he and his sons did, too."

"If you had, you'd probably be where they are now."

"That may be," replied Leon. "Perhaps it's because I have French blood in me, but all of a sudden I am becoming awfully excited about this whole thing."

The fire was burning hotly and all the buildings on the farm appeared to be doomed. Leon and his friend seemed stunned by the events of the day and merely stood aimlessly watching the conflagration, with no idea of what to do or where to go.

The two women now came up to them and made signs that they were leaving. They pointed toward the West and extended their hands to say good-by to the two men.

“Oughtn’t we to go with them?” said Leon.

“No, let them alone,” replied his friend. “They know where they are going and we can’t be of any use to them. Probably we’d only be in the way.”

They shook hands and the women turned and made their way off into the night. Their spirits seemed crushed and they could hardly be blamed for their feelings when in one short half-hour they had lost all their property and three men out of their family.

The two Americans watched them disappear into the darkness. Then they turned and in silence stood looking at the fire for some time.

At length Leon's friend spoke.

"Let's be on our way," he said.

"Where to?"

"To Brussels, of course."

"You mean to walk?" asked Leon.

"I don't see how else we could get very far," said his friend grimly. "We'd better be moving, too, as it is a long way from here."

There was nothing more said and in silence they started down the lane. Their baggage was gone, they had but little money, they had no idea where they were or in what direction to go, and the combination of circumstances made them anything but cheerful.

The night was dark and it was difficult to see the road with any certainty. Leon almost fell over the carcass of the German officer's horse stretched across the path. Stark and stiff it lay, a great dark blotch under the trees. A wave of pity for the unfortunate animal swept over the young American. The horse was not responsible for the war and yet here he was one of the first victims to be sacrificed, without having a chance to save himself. He had carried his master

faithfully where he had been directed and this apparently was the reward of his faithfulness.

Soon the two travelers came to the main road.

"To the right here, I guess," said Leon's friend.

"That's the way we were going when we were run away with, anyway," said Leon. "We might as well go that way as any."

"What's the matter? You seem discouraged," observed his companion.

"To tell the truth I do feel sort of that way. If I could only get a good meal and some sleep I'm sure I'd feel better."

"That's so, we didn't have anything to eat, did we? I'm tired and hungry myself."

"Where shall we spend the night?" asked Leon.

"I've no idea. Perhaps we'll have to sleep out somewhere. I'm afraid we might have another experience like the last one if we try any more farmhouses."

"Sleeping out doesn't worry me as much as not having any food," said Leon ruefully.

"Well, I don't see what we can do about it. In

the morning we can go to some house, but in such darkness as this I think it would be foolish, don't you?"

"Perhaps it would," agreed Leon. "Anyway, I guess I can stand it if you can."

They trudged on in silence for some time. No one passed them on the road, but the far off booming of guns could be distinctly heard. The steady rumble and roar of the cannon kept up incessantly and it sounded as if someone had a bass drum hidden in the bushes and was drumming quietly on it with his fingers.

Leon's thoughts were many and varied. He wondered what his brother Earl was doing now in England, and if he would be worried. England, too, had now declared war on Germany, he remembered having heard. Earl must know his brother was right in the thick of the trouble and perhaps he had been trying to reach him by telegraph or cable. That Earl himself could be in any trouble never occurred to Leon. How far he was from the truth, however.

His thoughts were interrupted by his friend's voice.

“Let’s go into this patch of woods and spend the night,” he suggested. “We can make beds out of branches or something and we ought to be safe enough there.”

“I’m agreeable,” replied Leon, and together they left the road and entered the woods.

Hardly had they reached the shelter of the trees when they were startled by the sound of a bugle only a short distance down the road.

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE MIDST OF THE ENEMY

GERMAN troops!" exclaimed Leon in a low voice.

"How do you know they're Germans?"

"I don't, but I think they must be."

"No matter who they are, I don't believe they'd be very glad to see us. We'd better keep out of sight."

"We're safe enough in the woods here, don't you think?" asked Leon. "No one will be likely to see us here."

"Oh, yes, we're all right where we are, but I think we'd better stay here."

They made their way slowly and carefully among the trees in the direction of the bugle-call. The clump of woods was not more than a quarter of a mile in extent and not especially thick, but the night was dark and there was but small chance of anyone spying the two refugees.

“They were probably just a troop marching by on their way to Liége,” whispered Leon.

“Perhaps so,” replied his friend. “Let’s take a peek out of the woods and see what we see. What do you say?”

“All right,” agreed Leon readily. “That suits me first rate.”

They continued their stealthy advance and before many minutes had passed they came to the edge of the woods. They were now on the side opposite that by which they had entered.”

“It’s a camp,” exclaimed Leon. “A large one, too.”

“It seems to be,” replied his friend. “I’d like to know whether it is Belgian or German.”

“What would you do if you knew?”

“Nothing, I guess. I don’t believe I’d want to walk into an armed camp like this in the middle of the night. Before you had a chance to say who you were some over-anxious sentry might—”

“S-s-h!” whispered Leon in his ear, at the same time grasping him by his arm and drawing him back among the shadows of the trees.

An instant later a sentry appeared. His gun

was over his shoulder and he peered intently into the woods as he came along. Leon and his friend almost held their breath, when directly opposite the place where they were standing the sentry stopped. He dropped his gun to the ground and stood looking in among the trees, apparently directly at the spot where they stood.

It was easier for them to see him than it would have been for him to make them out. He stood in the open field, his figure silhouetted against the sky, while the glow of the many camp-fires shone behind him. The two Americans did not realize this at the time, however, and they expected at any minute to hear the picket challenge them. Rigid they stood, without moving a muscle and scarcely daring to breathe.

All at once the sentry raised his gun to his shoulder again and moved on. He sighed heavily as if he was almost worn out, but he showed no signs of having seen anyone in the shadows in front of him.

For a full two minutes after he had gone Leon and his friend remained standing exactly as before.

“Come along,” whispered Leon’s friend at last; and crouching low they made their way deeper into the recesses of the woods.

Coming to a point which seemed to be about the center they stopped and seated themselves under a large tree.

“That was pretty close, I should say,” said Leon.

“It certainly was. I thought of course he had seen us; I don’t see how he failed to hear me talking, anyway.”

“I just saw something moving over a clump of bushes while you were talking,” said Leon, “and I didn’t wait for anything more.”

“It’s a good thing you didn’t. He was a German and probably unable to speak a word of English; we might have had a hard time explaining our presence here.”

“How do you know he was a German?”

“By his uniform. Didn’t you notice his helmet? I’ve seen enough German soldiers in my life to be able to recognize one anywhere.”

“Do you suppose he was attached to the cavalry that we met this afternoon?” inquired Leon.

“No, he was in the infantry, I’m sure. You see the cavalry usually goes on ahead and acts as a scout and as a screen for the infantry. The Uhlans we saw this afternoon were probably a part of the advance guard of these troops.”

“How many men do you suppose are in this camp?”

“I’ve no idea at all. Several thousand, though, I should say.”

“We’re right in it, aren’t we?” exclaimed Leon.

“We are indeed; too much so for me. Even if we are, though, we must get some sleep. Are you ready?”

“I am. Where shall we sleep? Right here?”

“It seems all right to me. The moss is fairly thick under these old trees and we ought to get some rest.”

“All right, then,” said Leon. “Good night.”

“Good night.”

A moment later two very tired and disconsolate young Americans were sleeping quietly beneath an ancient tree in a patch of woods in the heart of Belgium. All about them the great

game of war was going on. In the distance boomed the cannon of the defenders and besiegers of the valiant city of Liége. That afternoon they had had a first taste of some of the real horrors of war. In the evening they had stumbled right upon a huge camp filled with men whose main purpose in life at the present moment was to take life away from their fellowmen. The situation was bad.

However, the two Americans were untroubled by any such thoughts. They slept soundly and heavily until daybreak, when the sounds of bugles aroused them.

"The troops are moving," exclaimed Leon's friend, shaking him by the shoulder. "We'd better be awake and in a position to see what is going on."

"I'm awake," replied Leon, sitting up at once.

"Good. Let's creep over nearer the road and watch them march by. I think they have started already."

On their hands and knees they started their advance through the trees. They were afraid to stand up, now that it was becoming light; the

woods were quite open except in one or two spots and detection would have been easy.

There was one especially thick clump of bushes at one corner of the woods and towards this they made their way. It was no easy task to travel on all fours, as they were doing, and their progress was not rapid. Before long, however, they came to their destination and soon were hidden behind the thick bushes, but in a position where they could see the road plainly and for some distance.

The troops had started, as Leon's friend said. Down the road, in the direction from which the two refugees had come, they were headed. Five abreast they came, a grim looking procession. Every man was dressed in a steel gray uniform and in the early morning light the army looked almost like a huge bank of fog rolling down the road. At a little distance they seemed to become a part of the landscape and it was difficult to make them out distinctly.

Officers rode up and down by the side of the road exhorting the men to make better time. They swung along rank after rank and in silence,

except for the indistinct noise that arose from the foot-beats of such a vast horde.

It was an inspiring sight to the watchers from the bushes. It seemed to them they had never seen a more business-like or better equipped body of men than these. The wagons followed closely after each division, the cook-wagons interesting Leon most of all. He was forcibly reminded by the smell of food that he had not eaten since early the preceding day.

At length the marching troops had all passed. It seemed to Leon to have taken an endless time and he was stiff and sore from the cramped position he had been in. Making sure that no one was in sight the two crept out into the road. The roads seemed to be clear and they started to reconnoiter the spot where the camp had been.

"Hello, what's this?" exclaimed Leon, picking up a bundle lying by the roadside.

"Open it and see."

"It's a ham," said Leon joyfully, tearing the wrapping off one corner of his prize.

"One of the wagons must have dropped it,"

said his friend. "Do you think they will get it back?"

"I do not," replied Leon decidedly. "Food is what I want and here is some right here. Let's build a fire out here and cook it."

"We have nothing to cook it in."

"What's the difference? We can roast it on the end of a stick; I simply must have something to eat."

"All right," agreed his friend. "We're safe enough here, no matter who comes along."

"I guess so," said Leon. "At any rate it isn't worrying me much just now."

The camp ground was a large level field, about a half-mile square. Some of the fires were still smoldering and Leon soon had a cheery blaze started. They found sticks, and whittling them to a point, placed chunks of the ham on them, roasting the meal over the blaze.

"The best meal I have ever had," announced Leon, delightedly chewing at a morsel of half-cooked meat.

"It does taste pretty good, doesn't it?" replied his friend, also busily eating.

“I sort of like this life, anyway,” said Leon.

“There is just enough happening to suit me.”

“Well, here’s something more happening right now,” exclaimed his friend. “Look there!”

He pointed toward the horizon and to the south. Following his directions Leon looked, as his companion had suggested. Far distant he beheld a tiny shape against the clouds and then in back of the first one he saw another like it. They seemed to be approaching rapidly.

“What do you see?” inquired his friend.

“I see two aëroplanes, one evidently chasing the other,” replied Leon.

CHAPTER XV

AN OLD FRIEND

“**T**HEY'RE coming this way!” cried Leon excitedly.

He had immediately forgotten all about eating, so interested had he become in the flying machines.

“You're right!” agreed his friend. “It looks as if they would pass right over our heads. What makes you think one is chasing the other, though?”

“I don't know; I just said that. That's probably what is happening, just the same. The one in back is gaining, too, I think; just see them go.”

“You can't tell from here whether one is gaining or not,” protested his friend. “They're traveling pretty rapidly though.”

“I should say so! The second one *is* chasing the other!” exclaimed Leon excitedly. “I saw a puff of smoke and they were undoubtedly shooting at the one ahead.”

“There’s another shot!” he cried a moment later. “The one in the lead is firing, too.”

The aëroplanes were flying high and fast. There could be no doubt but that it was a pursuit and a chase, for from where the two Americans were standing they could see many tiny puffs of smoke, indicating shooting from both planes. There were evidently two men in each machine, but it was impossible to tell what flags were showing on the bottom of them.

Leon was almost beside himself with excitement.

“Look at that!” he cried. “They are right squarely over us now. How long do you suppose the race will keep up?”

“Well,” said his friend, “if that second machine is French, as I think it is, I don’t believe it will keep up very much longer. They are inside the German lines now and that aviator would be a fool to go any farther. He must have nerve to come as far as this.”

The fliers had passed them now and were traveling rapidly eastward. Suddenly, as Leon’s

friend stopped speaking, the second machine changed its course.

“They’re turning back,” exclaimed Leon. “You were right; it must be a French machine.”

“The first one is keeping right on, you notice. I guess they have had enough.”

“I’d like to have seen the Frenchman wreck it,” said Leon earnestly.

“You’re becoming awfully bloodthirsty, aren’t you?” exclaimed his friend.

“I am, and I’ve about made up my mind to enlist, too. Did you know that?”

“To enlist! What do you mean?”

“Just what I say. I’m going to enlist in the French army if I get a chance. I want to fight the Germans.”

“Do you realize what you are saying?”

“I certainly do, and I mean every bit of it. I am going to keep my intentions to myself, though, if we fall in with any more German soldiers.”

“I’m sorry you’ve decided to do this,” said his

friend seriously. "I don't see the use in your risking your life."

"I won't be hurt," said Leon confidently. "I'm lucky."

"The other day you said you were a Jonah."

"If I enlist I expect my luck to change," laughed Leon. "I'm serious about it, though," he added quietly.

"Well, I'm—"

"Look there!" interrupted Leon suddenly. "Here comes that aëroplane right down in this field. I had forgotten entirely about it when I was talking to you."

"Sure enough," agreed his friend. "It is going to land here, I believe."

Lower and lower dropped the great mechanical bird. The whirr of its motors could be plainly heard now, and there was no doubt that it would alight in the field where they were standing.

"It'll land over here," cried Leon. "Let's go meet it," and he immediately started on a swift run across the field.

His friend followed more slowly, but Leon stopped and waited for him. Close by their

heads skimmed the aëroplane and soon it hit the ground and ran along for about fifty yards before it came to a full stop.

“It’s a French machine, all right,” said Leon, as he caught sight of the tri-colored flag fastened to the bottom, “and one of the men in it is wounded, I should say.”

“He surely is,” agreed his friend. “Did you see how he sat there all limp and how his head just flopped over on one side?”

“That’s probably why they gave up the chase,” said Leon. “The men in the other aëroplane must have hit him.”

The two Americans were hurrying as fast as they could go over the ground to reach the machine, and for some strange reason it never seemed to occur to them that they might be taken for enemies.

A sharp challenge in French brought them to their senses, however, and they suddenly found themselves looking into the barrel of a big rifle held by one of the aviators. Both Americans halted abruptly and unconsciously threw up their hands. The man with the gun had an aviator’s

helmet on his head and it was impossible to see his features. Leon and his friend would have felt better if they could have seen the expression of his face.

All at once their challenger did a strange thing. He dropped his gun and rushed straight at the two astonished Americans.

“Leon,” he cried, “mon ami! It is I! It is Jacques.”

The man tore the helmet from off his head as he ran forward and sure enough it was Leon’s old friend, Jacques Dineau.

“Jacques!” cried Leon in his turn. “I certainly am glad to see you.”

He held out his hand enthusiastically to the young Frenchman. Jacques did more than attempt to shake hands, however; he grasped Leon around his neck and kissed him on both cheeks. The young American was not prepared for this greeting and was much embarrassed, greatly to his friend’s amusement.

“I am so glad to see you,” exclaimed Jacques; “but what are you doing here?”

“I might ask the same question of you,” said Leon.

“Ah, my comrade is hurt,” said Jacques, “and I had to descend. Come and see him.”

Leon introduced Jacques to his friend and then all three hastened to look after the wounded man. He was lying on the ground, his left leg shattered by a bullet. He was suffering great pain, but his teeth were set and he said little.

“He must have attention,” said Jacques, turning appealingly to Leon and his friend. “He will die soon if he does not.”

“Why not take him to that house over there?” said Leon, pointing to a little white cottage about a quarter of a mile away.

“Good!” exclaimed Jacques. “We three can carry him, if I dare leave my aëroplane here.”

“It’s a chance, all right,” agreed Leon’s friend.

“It must be taken, however,” insisted Jacques. “Come, we will hurry.”

Carefully they lifted the wounded man and bore him to the little white house in the distance. He

was in agony all the way, and, try as he would, he could not stifle an occasional groan. They reached the cottage at last, however, and were warmly welcomed by the Belgian peasants. The newcomers were the first of the French army they had seen and they were delighted to be of service. One of the children was dispatched to see if a doctor could be found and in the meantime Leon's friend, who knew something of medicine, cared for the wounded man. Much as Jacques wished to stay, he could not.

"I must hasten back to my aëroplane," he exclaimed. "Perhaps by now it is captured, as this country is all alive with Germans. It takes two to start it," he said, looking appealingly at Leon. "Will you help me?"

"I certainly will," cried Leon at once.

They wasted no more words, but hurried out of the house and ran back to the field where the aëroplane had been left. On the way they briefly outlined to each other their experiences since last they had met. Jacques was particularly excited at Leon's declaration that he intended to enlist

in the French army. He even stopped to congratulate him and shake his hand.

“That is wonderful, my friend,” he exclaimed. “I knew we would meet again, but I never expected it to be under such happy conditions. It makes me so glad to think of you wishing to fight on the side of France.”

“I intend to enlist the first chance I have,” said Leon. “If I can only reach the French lines! Of course I shall before very long, but until I do I have to be very careful.”

“Of course,” agreed Jacques. “I hope we may see each other often when that time comes. Unless of course some mishap comes to me.”

“Let’s hope not,” said Leon earnestly.

They soon came to the edge of the field and speedily were preparing the aëroplane for the start. Soon everything was ready and Jacques had climbed into his seat. They had said good-by and Leon was turning away. As he did so he spied a troop of Uhlan cavalry approaching down the road. They seemed to catch sight of the flying machine at the same instant, and a moment

later were spurring their horses at full gallop in its direction.

“Here come the Uhlans, Jacques!” cried Leon.
“Hurry for your life.”

Jacques glanced around.

“Come with me, Leon!” he urged quickly.
“You intend to enlist. Why not go with me now and do so? Decide at once.”

For an instant Leon was staggered by the proposal. Suddenly to start off like this was beyond his plans. But what was there to hinder him? As Jacques had said, he intended to enlist, so why not start now.

“I’m with you!” he cried, and an instant later was seated alongside Jacques in the aëroplane. The motor was started, Jacques turned on the power, they shot along the ground for about a hundred feet or so and then they rose steadily and swiftly.

Leon’s first ride in an aëroplane was commencing in a thrilling manner. Before he had time to collect his wits he heard an angry shout from below and a volley of shots rang out.

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE FRENCH LINES

“**T**HEY will never hit us,” sneered Jacques. “We were too quick for them and now we are out of range.”

Over the tops of the trees they sped. To Leon the whole country below him seemed like a great green rushing wave, and never before had he felt such a sensation of speed. Higher and higher they mounted, but as they left the ground below them the feeling of speed disappeared, the aëroplane seemed to be steadier and Leon for some reason felt safer.

He did not dare look down; it was his first experience in an aëroplane and he was afraid he might be dizzy. He was not nervous, however. His ride was planned for him so quickly and unexpectedly that he had had no chance to think about it.

“Look down,” said Jacques.

"I don't dare just now. Wait until I am a little more accustomed to being up here."

"That's so. I had forgotten this was your first trip. I said to look down because you could see the armies."

Glancing down quickly, Leon discovered that after all the sight did not affect him badly. Far below him the country lay stretching, green and fertile, before his eyes. Here and there were little white dots where the houses stood and connecting them ran little ribbons, which Leon supposed to be roads. It was a marvelous sensation.

"Where are the armies?" he asked.

"To our left," replied Jacques. "That river you see is the Meuse and along the bank you may see the German army encamped. Soon we shall be over Liège."

"How high are we?"

Jacques consulted his indicator.

"Nearly five thousand feet," he said.

"We're out of range, then, aren't we?"

"It would take a pretty good shot to hit us now," said Jacques grimly. "See, there is Liège."

Sure enough Leon could see the city just ahead of them. Situated on both banks of the Meuse it was evidently being subjected to a frightful bombardment. The noise of their motors prevented the sound of battle from reaching their ears, but continuous puffs of smoke indicated that heavy firing was going on.

"Tell me what you see," said Jacques. "I cannot look down very much, as I must keep my eye on my steering. We do not want an accident at this time."

"No, nor at any other time, either," said Leon fervently. "It's wonderful up here, though."

"Look quickly at Liège," cautioned Jacques. "We are traveling nearly sixty miles an hour and we will soon be past and unable to see what is happening."

"The Germans are trying to cross the river on little bridges," said Leon, quickly carrying out his friend's request. "The Belgians are firing at them."

"A whole bridge and everybody on it just disappeared," cried Leon in astonishment. "What shots those men must be."

“Do you see many German troops?”

“The east bank of the river is alive with them. Not right on the bank, but a little distance back; they are probably preparing to move forward.”

“Yes,” agreed Jacques, “and the slaughter will be frightful. The Belgians are very brave.”

“They certainly are. They are so brave they are reckless at times. I saw an example of that yesterday.”

Liège had disappeared in the distance now, and Leon had no idea whither the aëroplane was bound. He glanced at Jacques, who scarcely took his gaze off the planes in front of him, save for an occasional glance around. It was bitterly cold where they were and traveling at such a speed. Leon was chilled through, but he did not refer to his feelings. He glanced at the huge monoplane in which he was riding and a thrill shot through him as he suddenly realized he was riding in a French army aëroplane.

He was on his way to enlist in what would probably be the biggest war in the history of the world. Already he had been under fire and as he

looked back he remembered that he had not been frightened. He thought to himself, though, that he really had not had time to be either brave or a coward. The shots that whistled past their ears had made but little effect on him compared with his realization that he was going up in an aëroplane.

“Did you see us coming to-day?” asked Jacques, interrupting Leon’s thoughts.

“I certainly did and I was cheering for you to wreck that German machine, too. Where did you first meet it?”

“It was close to our lines. I had been sent out to scout the nearby country to see if any roving parties of Uhlans were about. Some few miles out we saw that German flyer approaching and we rose to meet it; it turned back and we followed. It was a hard chase and we should have soon finished them, I think, if my comrade had not been hit. We were gaining all the time and soon would have had a good shot at them.”

“You were reckless to follow them so far, I think.”

“Yes, we were. We did not realize how far we had gone, but we were very eager to catch them.”

“Where are we bound now?” inquired Leon.

“To my army. I hope it will be yours, too, very soon. We are nearly there now.”

“I am glad of that, for I am almost frozen.”

“Of course you are and it never occurred to me,” exclaimed Jacques. “I am so sorry.”

“It’s no matter at all, and I can stand it all right, but the next time I go flying I am going to wear more clothes.”

“What division of the army will you enlist in?” inquired Jacques.

“I don’t know. I haven’t thought much about that part of it; but in the infantry, I suppose.”

“How would you like to join the aviation corps?”

“What do you mean?”

“What I say. How would you like to join the aviation corps and be an air scout? Every machine carries two men, one the pilot and the other a lookout. You would be my lookout. My comrade who was wounded to-day was with me until

now, but he is disabled and perhaps it might be arranged for you to take his place."

"That would suit me better than anything else in the world!" cried Leon excitedly. "Do you think you can arrange it that way?"

"I am not sure, but I will do my best."

"I don't know anything about an aëroplane, you know," protested Leon. "That would count against me."

"Not of necessity. I am the pilot and I will run the engine, so to speak. You must keep your eyes open and make notes of all you see."

"That would be wonderful," cried Leon enthusiastically. "I feel quite at home in the aëroplane already and I am sure I could do the work."

"You must make no mistakes, you know," cautioned Jacques. "If we are sent out to locate the forces of the enemy we must report them exactly as they are, for an error on our part might mean failure to our whole army."

"I shall make no mistakes," said the young American confidently.

"I feel sure of that, and now here we are at our camp."

Far ahead Leon could see the encampment. It resembled a toy camp from where he was, the soldiers might have been the size of the little tin figures he used to play with when he was a small boy and the tents were proportionately small.

They were descending rapidly now and as they neared the trees once more, Leon had the same sensation of speed that he had felt when ascending. He came to the conclusion that it must be because they were close to objects and could see them rushing past. High in the air they had nothing to judge by, and for this reason they seemed to be moving more slowly and steadily.

About five hundred feet from the ground Jacques shut off the motor. Then they glided gracefully down and without mishap alighted in a large field adjoining the encampment. Mechanics at once took charge of the monoplane and soon rolled it in out of sight in a nearby hangar.

Leon was still cold and undergoing something of a reaction after his ride. He was intensely hungry, too. Jacques at once led him to his tent; there he left him and went in search of food. He soon returned with hot broth

and meat which Leon lost no time in consuming.

Jacques had to report his return and any items of news he might have picked up so he left Leon alone in the tent. Jacques was to inquire about the enlistment and bring back whatever information he could obtain.

Leon did not venture out, as he was unfamiliar with the regulations and spoke but little French. He lay on the narrow bed of blankets inside the tent and thought over all his experiences. He had certainly never contemplated anything like the things that had happened to him ever since he had left home.

Here was the most important thing of all, too, right at hand now. He was thinking of enlisting in the French army. Perhaps he might be killed or maimed for life. He knew that if he wanted to withdraw he could not do so later, and the present was the time to decide. He thought it all over slowly and seriously and in a brief time his mind was made up.

He had decided to enlist.

Just at that moment Jacques stuck his head in the flap of the tent and called him.

CHAPTER XVII

A SOLDIER OF FRANCE

“**I** WILL take you to the officer in charge,” said Jacques. “I have talked to him and am quite positive you may enlist in the aviation corps, as I suggested.”

“I hope so,” exclaimed Leon eagerly. “I am sure I can do all that is required of me.”

“Convince the officer of that and all will be well.”

“Does he speak English?”

“Not at all. I shall have to act as your interpreter.”

They now were walking through one of the narrow streets of the camp and everywhere Leon saw soldiers. The encampment was only a temporary one, and consequently was not in as good order as it would have been otherwise. No one knew how long the army would be stationed there and every man was prepared to move at a moment's notice.

The two young men, walking through the camp, aroused but little interest, though not a single detail of his surroundings escaped Leon's eye. What impressed him most of all was the attitude of the men; they all had an expression of eagerness on their faces as though impatient to move on and begin fighting at once. They seemed to be strangely confident and in fine spirits.

Leon spoke of this fact to his companion.

"Why not?" said Jacques simply. "Every true Frenchman is eager and happy to fight for his country. We do not want our land invaded and we are impatiently waiting for a chance to drive back the invaders."

"It's a wonderful spirit!" exclaimed Leon.

"Of course it is," said Jacques, "and that is one thing that France counts on. Here we are at our destination."

They had arrived at a large-sized tent, in front of which was posted a sentry. Jacques spoke a few words to this man who thereupon disappeared within the tent. He reappeared a moment later and held the flap of the tent open for the two young men to enter.

As they came in, an officer who had been sitting on a box writing, arose to meet them. Jacques saluted and then the two Frenchmen talked rapidly to each other for a few moments. The officer was a large man and he kept looking interestedly at Leon. Jacques was evidently praising his friend and doing all in his power to place him in a favorable light.

They ceased talking and the officer extended his hand to Leon who winced at the vise-like grip.

“He says you look all right,” said Jacques, smiling, “but he wants to be sure that you know what you are doing.”

“There is not the slightest doubt in the world about it,” exclaimed Leon seriously.

“Very well. Are you ready to sign now?”

“At any time. The sooner the better.”

Jacques conveyed this information to the officer who beckoned Leon over to the place where the box on which he had been seated was located. He picked up an impressive looking document with a huge seal on it and handed it to Leon. The young American could read the most of it and

Jacques supplied what he could not understand. He felt very serious as he read what would be required of him in his new duties in the army of France, but he did not flinch.

“You are satisfied?” asked Jacques at length.

“Perfectly.”

“Then you sign there,” said Jacques, pointing to a line at the bottom of the sheet. “First you must swear, though.”

With right hand raised Leon repeated as best he could the words the officer spoke. When all that was over, he affixed his signature to the paper and became a regularly enlisted soldier in the great army of the French Republic.

He seemed to feel about the same as before, though. The change he had just undergone had not seemed to affect him very much, except perhaps he felt a little older and more serious than he had a few days before.

The officer gave some directions to Jacques who led Leon out of the tent. The young Frenchman was overjoyed that his friend had enlisted and he could not conceal his delight.

“It is as I wished!” he cried joyously. “You

are to be attached to the aviation corps and are to be my scout."

"Isn't that lucky!" exclaimed Leon. "When do you suppose we will be sent out?"

"I cannot tell," said Jacques, smiling at his friend's enthusiasm. "Just now you are to come with me and be fitted for a uniform."

They soon arrived at the quartermaster's department and Leon was speedily supplied with a uniform. He was only a private but he felt very proud as they walked back through the camp to Jacques' quarters.

The aviation corps was not held under the same discipline as the rest of the troops and enjoyed more freedom. At the same time, when they were called upon for duty, as much or more was expected of them than of the others.

For several days they remained idle in the camp. Reports kept reaching them of the progress of the war in Belgium; of the bravery and success of the Belgian troops; of their stubborn resistance against superior numbers, but rumors persisted that in spite of everything the Germans were pressing steadily forward.

More French troops joined their encampment from day to day. The impression was rife among the soldiers that they were to go to the aid of the Belgians and many wondered and chafed at the delay.

“I don’t understand it,” exclaimed Leon one day to Jacques. “Why are we held here doing nothing, when the Belgian troops need every man they can get hold of to help them?”

“The reason is this,” explained Jacques. “I happen to know and will tell you, though you must guard the secret very carefully. The plan of the French commanders is to mass our armies along the border line and await the attack of the Germans. If you were to proceed either East or West or South from here you would find many encampments of our troops similar to this one. The scheme is for the Belgians to delay and harass the Kaiser’s army as long as possible so that our troops may have an opportunity to mobilize. Every additional day we are able to gain in this way is of assistance to us. English troops are expected at any time now and perhaps they have already arrived.”

“So that is the scheme, is it?” said Leon.

“As I understand it, it is.”

“It seems pretty hard for the Belgians.”

“It does indeed, but when there is war it is not easy for anyone. Everyone has his work to do and must do it without a question. What may be so difficult for a part is only a means of making the final result more favorable for the majority. Just now Belgium has the hard task.”

“Why aren’t we ordered out?” demanded Leon. “It seems to me we ought to be locating the positions of the enemy now, so we can plan better how to meet them when they come.”

“Do not worry,” said Jacques. “We will be sent out soon enough and then you will have all you want to do.”

“I suppose that’s true, but I am getting impatient, just sitting around here.”

“Aren’t you learning a great deal?”

“Yes, indeed, and I guess it’s all good training for me. When the time comes to strike I shall know better how to act.”

“Did you write those letters as I suggested?”

“Yes,” said Leon, “I did and they are posted and safely on their way now, I hope.”

“You are glad you wrote them, too, I think.”

“Yes, I am. My uncle in Paris will be delighted when he hears I have enlisted, and he will be awfully proud of me. I also wrote and told my family in America all about it. They will probably worry about me, but I guess they’ll think the war won’t last very long, and they’ll expect to see me home all right.”

“You told them you were in the aviation corps?”

“Yes, and I think that will make them feel better about it. I said I was an air scout and they know that aëroplanes are pretty safe to ride in now. High up in the air they know there is not the danger from bullets that there is on the ground and they will feel better about it on that account. I’m sure my father will understand my enlisting; he was young himself once and will know my feelings.”

“I’m very glad you informed them,” said Jacques seriously. “We all owe to our families

more than we can ever repay and we ought to be very considerate of them.”

The two young men were strolling leisurely through the camp, watching the soldiers and occasionally exchanging a word or two with some acquaintance.

Abruptly at that moment a change seemed to come over the whole place. An orderly on horseback galloped past them at full speed, shouting something in a hoarse voice. Immediately all was bustle and hurry; men ran hither and thither and the encampment looked like a great flock of birds that were becoming restless preparatory to taking flight.

“Come,” said Jacques, “the army is about to move and we shall be needed.”

CHAPTER XVIII

A SERIOUS MISHAP

THE troops were packing up and forming in line, ready to march. In spite of the vast numbers of men hurrying in all directions, there was no confusion; every man seemed to know exactly what was required of him and he went about his work in a calm and business-like manner. Bugles sounded, summoning the soldiers to their positions, and in an incredibly short space of time the army was ready to move.

Leon and Jacques made all haste to report to their commanding officer and were at once ordered to be ready for duty. They hurried off to equip themselves for their task.

On their way they passed several batteries of artillery being brought up. In some cases the huge guns required ten horses to draw them and Leon could not help shuddering as he thought of

the destruction that would be dealt out by these engines of death.

“We’re off at last,” exclaimed Jacques, “and now you will have all the action you want, I guess.”

“I am glad of it, though,” Leon replied. “Do you know where the troops are bound?”

“No one knows that, but the commanders. We obey orders and ask no questions. You and I will undoubtedly be sent out ahead to look for Germans. We’ll know soon anyway.”

When they arrived at their headquarters they found their aëroplane wheeled out onto the field and in readiness for the start. There were several other machines there too, the drivers and mechanics busied in touching up the engines and making certain that every detail was in order.

The two young aviators reported at once to their commander and received their orders. They were to proceed in a northeasterly direction from the camp, keeping a sharp lookout for the enemies’ location and were to report everything they saw back to their own army.

A map had been given Leon some days before. He had studied every detail of it most carefully until he was thoroughly familiar with all the country over which they would have to scout. It was his duty to indicate on this map exactly where the Germans were stationed, and to mark the roads over which they were traveling and the direction they were taking.

The division to which Jacques and Leon were attached was stationed not far from the town of Charleroi. They were to reconnoiter in the direction of Namur along the valley of the Meuse. Word had come to them that a large German army was advancing along that course.

“We are ready,” announced Jacques.

They took their seats in the big monoplane and prepared to start. Each was armed with a repeating rifle and many rounds of ammunition; these were stowed away in the car of the aëroplane within quick reach, and then the word was given to proceed.

The motor started with a series of loud reports and then as it quieted down, Jacques turned on

the power. They sped rapidly over the ground for a short distance and then rose steadily and gracefully.

“Are the troops moving yet?” inquired Jacques.

“They are beginning,” replied Leon, looking back at their army. “They seem to be following the direction we are taking and from here they look like a great army of ants just coming out of their hill.”

“It is impossible to tell as yet where they are going,” said Jacques. “They may start in this way and then turn abruptly at right angles in either direction.”

“But where are we to report when we come back?”

“At a spot near a town called Marchienne, which is to the west of Charleroi.”

“That looks as if the army was moving in that direction, doesn’t it?”

“Yes,” replied Jacques. “It is evidently for the purpose of carrying out some maneuver about which we know nothing. Few armies as a rule know where they are going.”

"I suppose that's so," said Leon and he fell silent, intently studying his map.

A moment later he raised his eyes to look about him in an endeavor to locate a certain spot.

"Aren't we flying very low?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, but I think it the best plan for a while. I do not think we can be seen from such a distance when we are low, and until we are farther away from our lines I think it best to keep as much out of sight as possible."

"Perhaps you are right," said Leon, "but it seems to me rather dangerous."

"It is dangerous, I grant, but we must take that chance."

"Just suppose," said Leon, pointing to a patch of woods ahead, which they were rapidly approaching, "that on the other side of those trees there is an encampment of Germans. We are flying low and they can hear us coming and be ready for us."

"I will rise a little higher," said Jacques.

He tilted the elevating plane and they began to mount up rapidly. They were immediately over the trees now and Leon was intently peering

down, anxious lest his feeling that the Germans were nearby should be right.

“There they are!” he exclaimed as they came within sight of the field on the opposite side of the woods. “There’s quite a large detachment there, too.”

It was evident that the aëroplane had been discovered. Leon could see the men rushing about below and pointing excitedly at the flier.

“We’re going higher every second,” announced Jacques. “I don’t know what more we can do.”

“There is nothing,” exclaimed Leon.

“They are firing at us,” he added quickly a little later, as a flash and a puff of smoke appeared below.

He hardly had the words out of his mouth when a shell exploded about three hundred feet below them. They could only hear the report indistinctly on account of the noise made by their engine. The flash could be plainly seen, however, and the concussion was felt strongly. The monoplane rocked dangerously and dropped like a shot for several feet. The effect was as if a hole had

been shot right in the air and had left nothing to support the machine.

It was an anxious moment for the two young aviators. Jacques, however, showed the quality of his nerve; he did not lose his head for an instant and almost immediately had his machine again under control. One lapse at a time like that might have been fatal.

“They’re firing more!” exclaimed Leon, who had not once relaxed his gaze upon the Germans. “That first one was close; but their aim is bad now, and I guess we’re safely out of range by this time.”

“It was foolish for me to fly so low,” said Jacques. “It was lucky I took your advice or we should not be here now, perhaps.”

“That was pretty close, all right,” laughed Leon excitedly. “I didn’t mind it so much though. I feel quite safe up here, and so far I like this game of war.”

“Yes, so far it has gone well for us,” agreed Jacques, “but of course anything may—”

He suddenly stopped speaking.

“What is the matter?” exclaimed Leon.

His companion did not answer for some seconds, but appeared to be listening very intently to some noise. An expression of anxiety came over his face.

"We shall have to land," he announced at last.

"Why so?"

"One of the piston valves is loose in the engine and must be fixed at once."

"But is it safe to land?" protested Leon.

"I do not know. It is not safe to stay in the air any longer, though, and we must risk it."

"What caused the trouble, do you think?"

"I have no idea. Perhaps it was the force of that bomb that exploded beneath us."

He shut off the engine and started to volplane down towards an open field appearing ahead of them. They could not tell whether or not any of the enemy were near by but it was imperative for them to descend. Leon knew that Jacques would not do a thing like this unless it was absolutely necessary.

"We may be going to certain capture," said Jacques. "I hope not, however."

"I see no signs of anyone about," said Leon,

keeping a sharp lookout as they came closer and closer to the field.

A moment later they landed and when the aëroplane came to a full stop they both sprang quickly out upon the ground.

“You keep a sharp watch,” suggested Jacques. “I will fix the engine and it won’t take me two minutes.”

Leon walked slowly around, keeping his eyes open in all directions for any possible signs of Germans.

“It will take me longer than I thought,” exclaimed Jacques irritably. “We may be here fifteen minutes.”

“We can’t be,” cried Leon excitedly. “Here comes a squad of Uhlans on the full gallop down the road now. They see us too. Can’t we start at once?”

“Impossible.”

“Shall we surrender?”

“Not at all. Leave the machine here and run for your life. There is no use in our being captured. Come along!”

CHAPTER XIX

A NARROW ESCAPE

LEON required no second bidding, as instantly he started to run at full speed. Jacques was off ahead of him and they ran in the opposite direction from that in which the Uhlans were approaching. This was their first impulse and beyond this they had no plans.

“Run for those woods!” cried Leon.

Jacques made no reply but that place was the one for which he also was racing. They gained the cover of the trees a moment later and before entering, Leon cast one glance behind him. The Uhlans were approaching at top speed across the field, waving their long lances and shouting hoarsely.

The two young aviators crashed their way in breathless haste through the bushes that impeded their progress. Deeper and deeper into the woods they went; the underbrush was very thick

and kept tangling and tripping up the feet of both the young men. They kept doggedly on, however, in fact it was a question of keeping on or being captured and there was no choice offered them.

Suddenly they came face to face with a high wire fence. It was at least eight feet high and the spaces between the wires were little openings about six inches square.

Out of breath and gasping they started to climb over this obstruction for it was impossible to go through it. Behind them they could hear the Uhlans entering the woods; their horses made a great commotion and noise as they plowed through the bushes.

As the two boys reached the top of the fence a loud shout greeted them.

“They see us!” gasped Jacques.

“It can’t be helped. Their horses can’t climb this fence anyway. We must hurry.”

As he spoke the sharp report of a rifle was heard behind them. A bullet whirred past their ears and with a thud imbedded itself in a tree near by.

Leon at the top of the fence lost his hold at this exciting moment and half fell, half slid down to the ground on the other side.

“Are you hurt?” cried Jacques, anxiously bending over his friend.

“Not a bit,” exclaimed Leon, springing to his feet. “Come along!”

“Bend over as you run,” cautioned Jacques. “That will make it harder for them to see us.”

Their breathing came hard and in short gasps as they sped on. Their legs seemed to weigh more than they could carry, and only the knowledge of what capture meant kept them going.

An angry shout from behind them indicated that their pursuers had come up to the wire fence.

“The horses can’t jump that fence,” panted Leon. “They’ll have to follow us on foot now.”

“They’ll do that all right. Hurry, for now is our chance to gain on them!”

It did not seem as if their tortured lungs and aching legs could endure any more effort, but it is surprising what can be accomplished when the necessity arises, and on sped the two boys.

“Shall we go into that house?” panted Leon, as they came to an opening in the woods where a deserted dwelling stood.

“No, let’s turn at right angles here and keep right in the woods. We may throw them off that way.”

The two young soldiers hurried on, but it was evident that the limit of human endurance had been nearly reached by them. They had almost come to the limit of their strength.

Suddenly they came out of the woods. In front of them was a large barn, and near by a house. The rear of the barn faced them and this door was open.

“Let’s go in there!” gasped Leon. “I can’t go a step farther. If I try to I shall drop.”

“Come quickly, then!” urged Jacques.

They darted through the open door and found themselves in a large barn. A few chickens scattered in fright as they burst in upon them and a horse somewhere near whinnied. There was no sign of any people about, however.

“Where shall we hide?” exclaimed Jacques.

Leon glanced quickly around him.

“In the haymow,” he panted. “There is a ladder.”

They rapidly ascended and making their way over into a dimly lighted corner they lay down and quickly spread hay all over themselves. They used great armfuls for this purpose, for they did not wish to run any risk of any part of their bodies being exposed.

The hay was full of dust which made its way into the boys' eyes and noses and mouths. It was difficult for them to breathe, but the only thing for them to do was to make the best of their situation.

It seemed hours to them that they had lain there, when suddenly they heard voices below. They were loud and angry and evidently belonged to several different people. Leon lay still, scarcely daring to breathe lest his hiding-place should be discovered. He decided from the tone of the voices below that the Uhlans were questioning someone, probably the owner of the barn.

He could hear different voices speaking harshly, and then the same one would usually re-

ply. It was evidently the owner trying to prove his ignorance of any fugitives being on or having passed over his premises.

All at once Leon heard someone mounting the ladder and his heart seemed almost to stop beating. Someone was walking all about the haymow, evidently looking for the two young aviators. Nearer and nearer came the footsteps. Leon could feel the hostile presence near him and he trembled lest the searcher should step on him or upon his comrade and thus discover their hiding-place.

The footsteps stopped when it seemed to Leon that the Uhlan must be standing directly over him. He wondered if their presence had been detected and if the German was tantalizing them. Then he heard an exclamation of disgust and the sound of the footsteps retreating. Could it be possible that they had not been discovered? It seemed much too good to be true.

A moment later he heard the man descending the ladder and the sound of voices once more came from below. A consultation was being held evidently, and in a short time he heard the voices

dying away in the distance. Everything in the barn remained quiet.

Still, neither Leon nor Jacques dared to stir. Suppose the Uhlans should set fire to the barn as he had seen them do but a few days before, thought Leon. He knew they were capable of such practices and the idea of it caused him intense anxiety.

For an almost endless time it seemed to him he lay still. He was cramped and stiff, but still he dared not move. He had heard no sounds below or outside the barn for a long time; but there was no way of finding out that the Uhlans had departed.

“Leon!”

“Sit up, I want to talk with you.”

It was Jacques speaking to him.

“What is it?” whispered Leon.

Carefully and as quietly as he was able, Leon removed the hay from his face and sat erect. When his eyes became accustomed to the dim light he saw Jacques sitting beside him.

“They’ve left, I think,” said Jacques.

“Yes, but we can’t leave yet,” protested Leon.

“Oh, no! I don’t believe it would be safe to try to get away before night comes.”

They spoke in low whispers, still fearful that some of their pursuers might yet be lurking about.

“I think we’d best wait till dark,” Leon agreed.

“We will sit here until all is dark and then we will steal out. That is our only course, and I fear our chances of reaching the French lines are slim under any circumstances.”

“The French lines!” exclaimed Leon. “Aren’t we going back after our aëroplane?”

“Don’t you know they will have a guard over that? What chance would we stand of taking it?”

“You are right,” said Leon thoughtfully. “Of course they will have it well guarded, and as you say the best thing for us to do is make a break for our army.”

“Yes, that is our only course.”

All through the long afternoon they sat quietly under the eaves of the old barn. No one came in and it appeared as if thus far at least, they had outwitted their pursuers. It was tiresome work sitting still as they were forced to do, however.

They had decided to travel all night, if possible, and then hide away during the day again. Possibly, Jacques thought, they might reach the French lines in one night, but it was hardly probable. He was familiar with the road though, he said.

They took turns sleeping. A hard night was ahead of them and they decided they would need all the strength they could muster. First, Jacques slept and Leon kept guard; then Leon slept, while Jacques played sentry. When the one on guard decided that his companion had slept an hour he awoke him and took his turn.

Leon was sleeping for the second time when Jacques shook him quietly and awakened him.

“Leon,” he urged, “it is time to start.”

Leon was wide awake at once, and carefully they crept over the haymow towards the ladder. Reaching this they descended swiftly and quietly, and a moment later had started out into the night on their perilous journey.

CHAPTER XX

THE FIELD OF WHEAT

“**S**TAY close to me,” whispered Jacques, “and don’t make any more noise than you can help.”

There was a light to be seen in the house as they emerged from the barn. Whether friend or foe dwelt there they could not say; probably it was a friend but this was not the time to find out.

“This way,” said Jacques.

They entered the woods again and kept close to their edge as far as it extended. This was for only a short distance, however, and soon they found themselves on the open highway.

“Is it safe to walk in the road?” asked Leon doubtfully.

“We can travel much faster here,” replied Jacques, “and I think it is worth the chance. If we keep a lookout both in front and behind us we should be able to see anyone coming in time to hide.”

“All right, then,” agreed Leon. “You say you know the way.”

“I think I do.”

They kept on in silence for a considerable distance. The night was clear and starlit, while a new moon had made its appearance so that there was light enough to enable the young aviators to pick their way readily. It was a strain on them, however, for they were compelled to be constantly on the alert for possible enemies. Every sense of sight and hearing was strained to its utmost.

There was an excitement and exhilaration about their travel, though, and Leon was enjoying himself. The feeling that at any moment they might be forced to hide or to run for their lives added just enough spice to their adventure to make it appeal to him.

They walked side by side, stopping every few minutes to listen and to look behind them.

“You don’t think there is any danger from the side of the road, do you?” inquired Leon.

“I think not. We are not apt to be ambushed.”

“That stretch back there with woods on both sides of us was what made me think of it.”

“It strikes me,” said Jacques, “that houses and open fields are the most dangerous places. Large forces are apt to be encamped in the fields, while squads of Uhlans may be staying over night at the farmhouses. They are sure to have sentries posted, too.”

“What’s that?” exclaimed Leon suddenly.

Grasping his comrade by the arm he drew him to the side of the road, and pointed skyward.

Jacques looked in the direction Leon pointed.

“It’s a Zeppelin,” he announced.

A great dark shape, clearly outlined against the sky, was rapidly approaching. It did not appear to be very high above the ground and there were no lights visible. It moved very rapidly, at least fifty or sixty miles an hour, and soon had passed over their heads and disappeared into the night.

“Whew!” exclaimed Leon. “Where do you suppose that was bound?”

“I’ve no idea. Perhaps to our lines.”

“To drop bombs, I suppose.”

“No doubt. That is what they are used for, principally. That was a big one, wasn’t it?”

“It certainly was,” Leon agreed. “How many men does one like that carry in her crew?”

“I cannot say. At least fifteen, I should think.”

“How do they aim the bombs?”

“In the daytime the Zeppelin mounts very high into the air. Then they lower a steel box with a man in it and he throws the bombs.”

“How far do they let the box down?” inquired Leon.

“About two thousand feet, I believe.”

“Two thousand feet below the Zeppelin? It seems impossible.”

“The idea is then that it will be very hard to hit it. The Zeppelin itself is so high it is a very small target and the man in the box suspended by the cable swings back and forth all the time. It is almost out of the question to hit him.”

The boys were so interested in discussing the powers of a Zeppelin that they had become somewhat careless about their own safety. They steadily trudged along, almost forgetting that they were probably among the enemy and liable to be attacked at any moment.

Something happened just then that brought them quickly to their senses, however.

A man suddenly appeared in the road not more than fifty yards in advance of them. His figure was clearly outlined against the sky and at the same instant the two boys recognized his German helmet and saw a gun resting over his shoulder.

“Quick!” whispered Jacques as he made a dive for the side of the road. Leon was only a step behind him and they crouched low, peering out at the soldier.

He had evidently seen them, however, for he uttered a shout and started to run down the road in their direction.

“Run for it!” exclaimed Jacques and pell-mell the two boys started across the field. They heard an exclamation in German behind them, evidently a command to halt, but they paid no attention to it.

The next moment they heard the whistle of a bullet as it passed over their heads. This was only the signal for them to increase their speed, however, and on they continued in their headlong flight.

Another bullet shrieked past their ears, but they did not stop until they reached the cover of a wheat field. The wheat had been gathered into shocks and behind one of these they dodged. They peered intently back over the field they had just crossed but they saw no signs of anyone approaching.

“Stay here until we get our wind back,” panted Jacques. “Then we will have to try it again.”

“I never noticed that man, did you?” whispered Leon.

“No, I didn’t. We were too busy talking of Zeppelins.”

“Well, it doesn’t pay to get careless, does it?”

“By all means, no. We must never let such a thing occur again.”

“Are you ready to go on?” inquired Leon.

“All ready.”

They kept in the wheat field until at last they came to its border and before they reached the other side they experienced many a thrill. In the dim light it almost seemed as if half of the shocks were men, and more than once they thought them-

selves captured. They emerged far from the road and took good care to remain far away.

“We’ll make a *détour* here,” said Jacques.

“Yes,” agreed Leon. “We must have run right into a camp back there.”

“Our friend was probably the sentry,” chuckled Jacques. “Perhaps they think a force is coming to attack them. I trust that we gave them something to think about, anyway.”

“They’ve given us something to think about, all right! I wouldn’t be surprised if we were right in the thick of them.”

“We are,” exclaimed Jacques. “Look ahead there!”

Both the boys stopped still and strained their eyes to see ahead of them.

“What is it?” asked Leon. “I don’t see anything.”

“It’s a camp. Can’t you make it out?”

“I can now,” said Leon a moment later. “How are we going to escape it?”

“By going around it.”

“There is no cover here. We shall be seen.”

“We’ll have to crawl, then.”

Dropping on all fours the two young fugitives began their arduous task of trying to go around the camp. Their progress was slow and difficult; their clothes were soon torn by the rough ground and it was not long before their knees and hands were cut and bleeding.

Every few feet they stopped and looked about for sentries or outposts. Once they saw a picket approaching and they lay flat on their faces until he had passed. He was not over seventy-five feet from them and it was an anxious moment for the two boys until he was gone.

For more than an hour they crawled on in this manner. At the end of that time they reached the cover of some trees on the opposite side of the camp and rising to their feet they ran and lay down under one of them, well-nigh exhausted.

After a few short moments of rest they once more proceeded on their way. They came back to the road again and this time they did not relax their vigilance even for an instant. They slowly advanced without mishap, however, and, just as

dawn was creeping up over the horizon, they came within sight of a city.

“What is that place?” inquired Leon.

Jacques studied it intently for a short time.

“It’s Marchienne,” he announced. “We are back safely at last.”

CHAPTER XXI

A PERILOUS EXPEDITION

THEY soon passed the outposts and sentries and in a short time were safely back among their own troops.

“We must report first of all,” said Jacques, and they hastened to present themselves before their commanding officer.

Jacques related their experiences and they were complimented on their action. The officer agreed that under the circumstances they had no choice but to abandon the machine.

He advised them to get some sleep before they did anything else, and the young aviators were not slow to take advantage of this suggestion. A few moments later they were rolled in their blankets, enjoying a well-earned rest.

It was afternoon when they awoke.

“Let us find some food now,” suggested Jacques.

“That’s what I want,” exclaimed Leon heart-

ily. "I feel so hungry I think I could eat shoe leather."

"I hope that will not be necessary, however," laughed Jacques. "Come along and we'll soon find out."

They made their way to one of the numerous cook wagons and succeeded in getting a cup of coffee and also a huge ham sandwich for each.

"This is easily the finest meal I have ever eaten," announced Leon, munching away with evident satisfaction.

"I agree with you," exclaimed Jacques. "Never have I tasted more delicious food."

The words were spoken half in jest and half in earnest. When men are fighting and engaged in the great business of war their appetites become so developed that any kind of food is welcomed. Oftentimes there is not enough to supply everybody's needs, and consequently that which is allotted is all the more appreciated.

"What are we to do now?" inquired Leon when they had finished their meal.

"I am going to see a friend of mine, if I am able to find him," replied Jacques.

“Don’t we have to report this afternoon?”

“Not until evening. Will you come with me?”

“I guess not. I think I’ll write a letter and get some more sleep, perhaps, if we are to have all the afternoon free.”

“Very well, I shall meet you later.”

Leon procured writing materials and an old box. He used the box for a desk and sat down to write a letter to his brother Earl. He had not yet informed his brother that he had enlisted and he felt he ought to do so. Earl of course would not know anything about it, and though there was but slight chance of the letter ever reaching its destination, he wanted at least to start one on its way.

He thought of his twin brother as being in England and out of the way of harm. Earl was probably worrying about him, though, he was sure, and he wondered if he would make any attempt to find him. Leon smiled as he thought of his brother’s surprise when he should hear of his enlistment. He knew Earl would be a little envious of him, and perhaps when he received this letter he might try to cross the English Channel and enlist himself.

He worked busily for some time and had just completed his letter, when he saw Jacques approaching, running swiftly as he came. Leon could see too that his comrade was greatly excited over something.

“What is it?” he exclaimed as Jacques came up.

“I have news for you!” panted Jacques out of breath from his running.

“Well?” said Leon, as the young Frenchman still hesitated.

“One of our airmen has just come in, a man named Jules Foutrelle. He covered the same ground we did yesterday. On his way back he says he saw our *aéroplane* standing in the field just where we left it. Now my plan is to go out and bring it in.”

“How are you going to do it?”

“In one of the armored automobiles.”

“But,” protested Leon, “there is that big encampment of German troops between us and the place where we left our car.”

“Not now. Foutrelle reports that they have left; he saw them marching westward.”

“And no one is with the *aéroplane*, at all?”

“Yes,” said Jacques, “there were about a dozen Uhlans there, he said. They are probably guarding it until some one of their aviators comes along to take it away. If we can reach there before that happens, we shall have a good chance of having our monoplane back again.”

“All right. I’m ready to start whenever you are.”

“Right away!” exclaimed Jacques. “There will be six of us, including the chauffeur, and we will start at once.”

On the way Leon posted his letter in the camp post office, fervently hoping that it might reach its destination safely.

“Here we are,” cried Jacques as they saw the great automobile waiting for them.

Mounted on the back was a quick-firing gun with its two operators. There was a driver, and a soldier seated beside him armed with a repeating rifle. Leon and Jacques were equipped in a similar manner and at once took their places in the car.

The automobile was started at once and the few men standing nearby and who knew the object of their mission, gave them a cheer as they

rolled out of the camp on their perilous journey.

It was a desperate undertaking in which they were engaged and every man realized it to its fullest extent. They were all soldiers who had volunteered for the expedition. No one was forced to go, but many had offered themselves. As a consequence, they were all eager to start.

Jacques gave directions to the driver as to the roads they should follow and they were soon speeding along at a rate of fifty miles an hour.

“There is where the German camp was,” exclaimed Leon as they passed an open field.

“Yes, and my knees are still sore,” said Jacques ruefully. “I never want to crawl as far as that again.”

“There is the wheat field, too,” announced Leon a moment later. “How many imaginary Germans do you suppose we saw there last night?”

“At least a thousand, I should say,” replied the young Frenchman, smiling grimly. “I hope we don’t see as many as that when we come to our aëroplane.”

They lapsed into silence as they came nearer

to the end of their journey. Each boy realized just how desperate the undertaking was in which they were sharing and consequently they lost all their desire for conversation.

The automobile came to a stop about a half-mile from the field where the aëroplane lay and Jacques and one of the French soldiers immediately got out. They were to go ahead to find out what the conditions were and to decide on the best method of attacking the Uhlans.

Guns in hand and equipped with powerful field glasses, they started along the road. There was a hill at one side of the highway which commanded a view of the field from its summit. It was their plan to reach this and spy on the Germans through their field glasses. Then they were to come back to the automobile and report.

The car had been backed into a clump of trees near the road in order to keep it out of sight as much as possible.

The scouts were gone for what seemed an interminably long time to those who were waiting in the automobile. In reality it was not more than thirty minutes at the most, however. It was

an anxious half-hour and a sigh of relief was heaved when the two men were seen returning.

The soldiers reported to the Frenchmen while Jacques told the news to Leon.

“They are sitting around on the ground,” he exclaimed, “as if there was not the least danger in the world. They evidently don’t suspect a thing, and now is our chance.”

“Vitement!” cried the French chauffeur.

“Quickly! suits me first rate,” muttered Leon to himself and an instant later they all had started.

The muffler was closed to make as little noise as possible. The quick-firer was poised and ready for action; the men with rifles held their guns raised and in a position where they could be used at a moment’s notice.

The car sped down the highway.

CHAPTER XXII

A BRUSH WITH THE UHLANS

“**T**HERE they are!” cried Leon.

The car came to a stop. Not a hundred yards away the great aëroplane could be seen resting in the field, while a short distance from it a dozen Uhlans sat or lolled about on the grass in a most careless fashion. Their horses were hobbled and grazing nearby.

The moment the big armored automobile hove in sight, however, the Germans were all in action. One of them uttered a warning shout and they all sprang to their feet.

As they did so the quick-firer was turned loose upon them. A hail of bullets poured from its mouth and five of the Uhlans fell where they stood.

The Frenchmen uttered an exultant yell and the automobile charged. Across the field it raced, directly at the Uhlans who had been completely taken by surprise. The rain of bullets continued

from the rapid-fire gun, while the three rifles also did deadly work.

Four more Uhlans crumpled up and though a few shots were fired by the Germans no one in the automobile was touched. There were but three of the enemy left now and one of them turned and ran for the aëroplane as fast as he could go.

It was evidently his intention to do some damage to the machine so that it would be useless to the French.

Leon instantly perceived his purpose, and, taking aim at the speeding German, he fired. The man stumbled, his knees sagged and he pitched headlong to the ground. There he lay and not a muscle of his body moved. Leon's aim had been true.

The two remaining Uhlans throwing away their guns, held up their hands in token of their surrender.

The firing ceased at once.

The Frenchmen leaped from the automobile and while Leon and the chauffeur kept the Germans covered with their rifles the other men made them prisoners. Their hands were securely tied and

they were placed in the car to be taken back to the French lines.

“Here’s a man wounded,” exclaimed Leon running forward.

One of the Uhlans lay groaning on the ground, a thin stream of blood running down his leg.

“Disarm him,” cried Jacques hastily. “Look out for yourself there, Leon!”

He spoke none too soon. The Uhlan whose arms were still good, had an automatic revolver concealed under him and as Leon approached he drew it quickly.

The young American waited for nothing more. He sprang at his adversary and with all the force that he could muster he kicked him. The blow landed on the wrist that clutched the revolver and the weapon was sent spinning through the air.

“That was awfully close!” exclaimed Jacques, “I thought you were done for then.”

“Help me tie him up,” was the only reply Leon made to his comrade’s remark. He knew he had had a close call, but he considered the matter of binding up his prisoner a more important matter just then.

"I guess his wrist is sore now, too," said Jacques sneeringly. "See how he holds on to it."

It was true. The German seemed to have forgotten about his bullet-wound, and had grasped his wrist with his left hand while his groans were louder than ever.

The two boys quickly bound him so that he could do no more harm, and then carried him over to their automobile. Altogether they had taken five prisoners, two unhurt and three wounded. Seven of the Uhlans were dead.

"A very good afternoon's work, I should say," exclaimed Jacques exultantly. "You did fine work too, Leon, my friend, and our officers shall hear of it."

"I did no more than anyone else," protested Leon.

"Oh, well, we shall not argue about it," said Jacques smilingly. "You are far too modest."

"Come look at our aëroplane," exclaimed Leon. "We can't afford to waste much time around here and we ought to be starting soon."

Another reason why he wanted Jacques to look

at the aëroplane was to direct the conversation away from himself. He naturally felt proud of his part in the skirmish, but he was modest as his friend had said, and he did not like to be publicly praised.

Jacques did as Leon suggested and was soon at work on the engine. The other members of the party were busy placing their prisoners in the automobile and to this work Leon also lent a hand. The automobile was soon ready to start back, and when Jacques announced that the aëroplane was fit for a flight it immediately "chugged" away.

The two young aviators waved good-by to their comrades and then they also prepared to depart.

"Some pretty good horses going to waste here," remarked Leon, as they took their seats in the monoplane.

"I know it," said Jacques, "but what are you to do about them? Certainly we can't take them home with us."

"Not very well," laughed Leon. "It seems a shame though just to go away and leave them like this for some more Uhlans to get."

“Let’s hope the Belgians will discover them first. Are you all ready?”

“All ready.”

A moment later they were on their way back to camp. The aëroplane seemed none the worse for its night in the open and as it steadily rose it carried two very proud young aviators.

“If my uncle in Paris could hear about this,” exclaimed Leon, “he would be so proud of me he would probably lose his mind.”

“That would surely be a calamity,” laughed Jacques.

“Well, he doesn’t like the Germans. He fought in the Franco-Prussian war and he has never forgotten what the Germans did to the French then.”

“He fought actively?” inquired Jacques.

“Ask him that. To hear him talk about it you’d think he killed about half the Prussian army himself. He fought at Sedan under Marshal MacMahon and it almost broke his heart when the French surrendered.”

“Let us hope that history will not repeat itself in this war,” said Jacques fervently. “My father

also was at Sedan. When I left home a short time ago his last words to me were to do my best to avenge my country. He would be here himself right now, if they would take him."

"It is wonderful," said Leon. "You know everyone in the United States thinks that the French are such excitable people, but I must say I haven't seen it. Never have I seen such a calm and self-possessed lot of people as the French since the war broke out. I have changed my opinion."

"It is wonderful," Jacques agreed.

"Look ahead there!" he abruptly exclaimed. "Isn't that our automobile on its way back?"

"It certainly is," announced Leon after one quick glance. "Let's see if we can beat them back to camp."

A race ensued in which the aëroplane had but a slight advantage. It made faster time than the automobile, but it took longer to come to a stop and consequently the men from the automobile were the first to bring the news of their exploit into camp. The news spread like wildfire and as the two young aviators stepped out of their ma-

chine they were seized by a cheering mob and borne in triumph to headquarters.

They made their report, were congratulated by their officers, and then tried to steal quietly away. No such thing, however, was possible for them. A crowd was waiting for them and once more praise and congratulations were heaped upon them. In the throng Leon noticed many English soldiers now. The looked-for reënforcements from across the channel were evidently beginning to arrive.

At last the two boys escaped from their admirers and went to their own quarters. They were seated on the ground busily engaged in oiling and cleaning their rifles when a big Irish infantryman approached.

"Are youse the two boys what captured them Germans?" he asked, stopping in front of Leon and Jacques.

"We helped," replied Leon smilingly.

"Who kicked that feller in the wrist?"

"I did," said Leon. "Why do you ask?"

"Because," said the Irishman, "I just seen him and his arm was broke by the force of it. I

made a remark to one of me friends that whoever done it must have been part mule or he nivver could have kicked so hard."

"I hope I have no mule blood in me," laughed Leon. "I never knew it before anyway."

"That's all right, me boy," said the Irishman warmly. "Ye done foine worrk and I hope yez keep it up."

CHAPTER XXIII

ONE BOMB TOO MANY

“**R**EPORTS are coming in,” said Jacques the next morning, “that enormous bodies of Germans are advancing this way.”

“Through Belgium, do you mean?” remarked Leon.

“Yes. One of our aviators just came in and reported that the whole country north of here is swarming with them.”

“How far did he go?”

“As far as Brussels. They have captured both Louvain and Brussels. It is estimated that over two hundred thousand German troops passed through Brussels in the last twenty-four hours.”

“Headed this way?” exclaimed Leon.

“We believe so. They are evidently going to try to make a desperate rush into France over our northern border somewhere.”

“Are we to oppose them here?”

“I can’t say,” replied Jacques, “but I doubt it. I have a feeling that we will withdraw to the neighborhood of Mons which is on the border.”

“How about Liège? Has that fallen yet?”

“It is hard to find out definitely, but I heard a rumor that some of the forts were still holding out.”

“What a splendid defense they have made.”

“Indeed, they have,” exclaimed Jacques. “The Kaiser certainly was fooled when he thought he was going to march straight across Belgium and reach France in about two days. Did you hear how the Germans finally put some of the Liège forts out of commission?”

“No, I haven’t heard a thing about it.”

“Well,” continued Jacques, “I heard that the guns they brought into Belgium at first could make no impression on the Liège forts at all. The Germans then sent back home to the Krupp factories and got a new type of gun that has just been perfected.”

“How big a gun?”

“Thirteen and a half inches; just think of that.

It took over thirty horses to haul it. The Germans set it down four miles from one of the forts and the first shell they fired killed one hundred and twenty-five men."

"Is that really so?" exclaimed Leon.

"I can't swear that it is true, but that is the report I heard. It shows the Germans are beginning to realize what they are up against when they send home for such guns."

"It's awful, the destruction one of those big guns can do, isn't it? When do we report again?"

"At half past nine. It's a few minutes after nine now, so we'd better be starting."

When they came to the aviation field they were ordered to start out at once. The Allies' commanders were considerably worried over the rapid German advance and they were anxious to find out all they could at once.

On this trip Leon and Jacques took with them some bombs. It was considered a good thing to worry and harass the enemy as much as possible, as well as to search out their positions. Certainly a bomb was a splendid means of accomplishing this purpose.

They were soon under way, flying rapidly northward. The bombs were safely stowed away in the car of the aëroplane and Leon kept a sharp watch for German troops. He was anxious to try his skill at dropping bombs.

“I haven’t seen a sign of any troops yet,” he exclaimed after they had covered about twenty miles.

“Nor I,” said Jacques. “Wait a few moments though and I think we’ll see some.”

“You’re right. There they are now.”

“In which direction?”

“On our left. Steer that way and we’ll fly over them.”

“I’ll mount a little higher,” said Jacques. “We don’t want to be hit and we can see their position just as well.”

The aëroplane described a huge circle, rising higher and higher all the time. Finally it was directly above the marching army. The troops were strung out in a huge line below them and gave the appearance of an immense caterpillar wending its way across the country.

“There are an awful lot of men in that division,” remarked Leon in a low voice after a careful scrutiny of the men below.

“Yes,” said his comrade, “there must be at least one army corps there.”

“Whew!” exclaimed Leon. “Forty thousand men.”

“Mark their position on your map.”

Leon quickly did so.

“Now how about letting a bomb or two drop on their heads,” he suggested eagerly.

“Wait a few moments,” cautioned Jacques. “We must see if there are any more in the region around there. We’ll fly north and come around in a big circle; that ought to cover all the ground.”

“All right. I hate to miss a chance like this, though.”

“Look there,” he cried suddenly. “They are firing at us.”

Little black puffs of smoke appeared in the midst of the masses below them. Through the glasses Leon could see countless guns pointed skyward in their direction.

“They’re pretty lucky if they hit us, that’s all I can say,” remarked Jacques. “We’ll keep right on.”

The aëroplane was not touched, though it was an anxious moment for the two young aviators. The sensation of sitting in a flying-machine, high in the air and constantly wondering whether or not shots fired at you from below will hit you, was none too pleasant.

“They missed us that time, all right,” sighed Leon in relief.

“Yes, and they can’t hit us now; we’re too far away. It would be next to impossible for rifle fire to strike us at this height anyway. A cannon is the only thing that would do it, and by the time they had it aimed we would be about a mile away.”

“There are more troops coming this way,” said Leon.

“Sure enough. How many are there?”

“I can’t tell yet. Wait until we are closer.”

“About the same number as in that last crowd, I should say,” he announced a moment later.

“Ah, another army corps probably. That

makes two so far. I wonder how many more are coming."

They increased their altitude above this division and as far as Leon could see there were no shots fired at them. Flying a few miles farther north they swung around to the right in a great loop and started back again. Two more army corps of German soldiers were encountered.

"Four army corps; a hundred and sixty thousand men," remarked Leon. "That's quite a large army, I should say."

"Indeed, it is. Now I think we'd best go back."

"If you say so."

"Have you marked your map in all four places?"

"I have and I hope we shan't have to do it again."

"I agree with you," said Jacques earnestly. "You don't see anything of that first corps we passed, do you?"

"Why, were they near here?"

"Just about here, I think."

"Yes, there they are!" exclaimed Leon. "A little to our right."

“Let’s drop a couple of bombs on them and give them something to think about.”

“By all means,” cried Leon heartily. “Can’t we go a little lower though?”

“It’s dangerous.”

“I know that, but at the same time it will be more dangerous for our German friends down there, too.”

“Suppose they hit us?”

“They can’t do it. I’m not a bit afraid.”

“I’m willing if you are,” said Jacques; and gradually he descended as they approached the Germans below them.

“Get the bombs ready,” he cautioned as they came closer. “Don’t waste any if you can help it, either.”

“Not on purpose,” said Leon grimly.

The bomb was heavy but he hauled it out from under the seat and held it poised ready to release it.

“Let it go now,” exclaimed Jacques.

The bomb fell rapidly and as Leon peered down to see if his aim was good, he suddenly saw a burst of smoke in the very center of the German

troops. A gap appeared in the ranks, the men ran hither and thither and evidently there was great confusion.

“Did you hit them?” queried Jacques.

“I certainly did,” replied Leon triumphantly.

“Wait a minute and I’ll give ’em another.”

Jacques described a great circle and then once more steered the monoplane back until it was directly above the Germans. Leon secured another bomb and sent it after the first one. His aim was poor this time, however, and he was disgusted to see his missile strike in a field some distance away from his mark. Evidently no damage was done by it.

“That was poor,” he remarked disappointedly.

“I thought I was a good shot after that first one, but I’m afraid it was mostly luck.”

“Are they firing at us?” inquired Jacques.

Leon peered down.

“I should say they were,” he remarked. “It looks as if half of them were shooting at us.”

“Don’t you think we’d better go back?”

“Just one more,” Leon pleaded. “I am sure I can do better this time, and we have only one left.”

“All right,” Jacques agreed somewhat unwillingly. “This is the last one, though, for we can’t afford to take too many chances when we have such important news to report.”

“One more is all we have,” said Leon. “Go a little lower, Jacques; they can’t hit us.”

“I’m not so sure of that. I’ll do as you say, though.”

Dangerously low they sailed. Leon was excited now and paid but slight attention to the risk they were running. Taking careful aim he let fall the third bomb and yelled exultingly as he saw it burst in the very center of a mass of men who had halted and were firing at the aëroplane.

“I did it that time,” he cried. “Now run for home; every man down below there is shooting at us.”

Jacques needed no encouragement. Pointing southward he turned on all the power, at the same time rising to a higher elevation.

They had gone but a slight distance when their machine suddenly rocked violently. It righted itself a moment later however and on they sped.

“We’re hit,” said Jacques calmly, “but I don’t know where.”

“I do,” replied Leon. “That left plane has four bullet holes in it, right in a line.”

“I hope no braces are cut.”

“So far, it seems all right enough.”

“Yes, ‘so far.’ I am hoping our good luck will keep up until we get back.”

“We certainly did fix those people, didn’t we?” exclaimed Leon, unable to think of anything else. “They would have given anything to have brought us down.”

“I guess they would, all right,” Jacques agreed, and he turned to look anxiously at the four bullet holes.

“What’s the matter?” said Leon. “Those little holes can’t do any harm!”

“I’m not so—”

Before he could finish his sentence the monoplane suddenly began to buck and rock like an unbroken horse. It darted swiftly downward, Leon hanging on for dear life and Jacques, white-lipped and determined, trying desperately to regain control of the plunging machine.

CHAPTER XXIV

A DARING ATTEMPT

DOWN, down, down they went for what seemed almost an endless time. Leon felt as though years were scudding by in the few brief seconds that followed.

He had given up all hope, and shut his eyes to blot out the sight of the ground which seemed to be rushing up to meet them. He did not dare look at his friend. Neither one of them uttered a sound; in fact they had no breath or time.

Leon thought his eyes had been closed for at least five minutes and he was all braced for the expected crash. The thought flashed through his mind that at any rate it would all be over so quickly that he would not feel the collision when they struck.

Suddenly the bump came, but it was not what Léon had expected. He pitched forward and barely escaped falling from his seat. He opened

his eyes in amazement to find that they were about a hundred feet above the ground and that Jacques had checked their downward fall to some extent. He had succeeded in pointing the machine's nose up and when at last it had responded there was a violent jerk.

Jacques was fighting desperately. The plane through which the bullets had gone had partly buckled up, and was the cause of their trouble. Jacques had shut off the engine and though he had somewhat checked their fall, he could do nothing further.

They were still traveling at a rapid pace, and continually falling lower and lower. Jacques could do but little to steer the machine and both realized that it was only a question of time before they would be wrecked.

"Here we go!" cried Jacques as they suddenly swerved and plunged directly at a large poplar tree.

The next moment there was a crash and Leon remembered nothing more.

He opened his eyes some time later; he had no idea how long it had been since the crash and

at first he could not fully recall what had happened. He passed his hand over his face and feeling something warm on his fingers he discovered that they were covered with blood.

Suddenly it all came back to him. He tried to sit up and to his great surprise discovered that the attempt caused him no inconvenience. His head was sore and he knew he must be bleeding considerably, but in a few moments he felt well enough to rise to his feet.

Wiping the blood out of his eyes he looked about him. The aëroplane was partly on the ground and partly hanging on the tree into which it had crashed. It was a complete wreck.

He looked in vain for Jacques. He hurried around to the other side of the wreckage, a great fear gripping his heart lest he should find his comrade dead.

“Hi, there, Leon,” a voice greeted him.

The young aviator instantly stopped in amazement.

“Here I am,” called Jacques, for it indeed was he.

Jacques was stretched out on the ground, flat

on his back. His legs were caught under a portion of the wrecked aëroplane and he had been unable to extricate himself.

“Are you hurt?” cried Leon in alarm.

“No, but you are,” replied Jacques. “Your head is simply smeared with blood.”

“It can’t be much for I don’t seem to feel it. It’s probably only a scalp wound.”

“I’ll look at it in a moment if you will help me to get out from under this machine.”

Leon grasped the part of the wreckage which held his comrade prisoner, and straining with all his might he succeeded in raising it a few inches. This was enough, however, to allow Jacques to wriggle loose, and in a short time he was able to pry himself free and stand up.

“Now let me look at your cut,” he said to Leon.

The strain of his exertion had caused the wound to start bleeding afresh, so that it was difficult for Jacques to see just how bad it was.

“We’ll have to wash it out, I guess,” he said after a short examination. “Isn’t there a brook near here?”

“There ought to be one over there,” said Leon,

pointing to a line of willows a short distance from them.

“Come along, and we’ll soon find out.”

“What are we going to do about the aëroplane?” inquired Leon, as they made their way across the field.

“Leave it where it is. What else can we do? It is a complete wreck and we don’t want to hang around here now with a hundred and sixty thousand German troops coming our way.”

“It was all my fault that we were wrecked.”

“Nonsense,” protested Jacques. “That is one of the chances an aviator has to run.”

“I was responsible for our dropping that last bomb, though,” insisted Leon. “We’d never have been touched if we hadn’t tried that.”

“Please forget about it. Here we are at the brook and as soon as you are fixed up we will have to start back to our lines as fast as we can go. The Germans can’t be very far behind us and we haven’t much time to lose.”

“How far from our troops do you think we are?”

“Twelve or fifteen miles I should say. You

see we are not in the best possible place. I shouldn't be surprised to see advance guards of German cavalry at any minute now."

"Let's hurry, then!" exclaimed Leon.

"Give me your undershirt," ordered Jacques. "I need it to make a bandage of."

Leon quickly complied and then kneeling on the bank he leaned out over the water while his comrade carefully washed out his wound.

"That will soon be well," remarked Jacques. "It's only a cut in the scalp and ought to heal very quickly."

"It stings some now," said Leon.

"Of course it does. The cold water would make it do that. Stand up now and I'll put a bandage around it."

He quickly tore the undershirt into strips which he then proceeded to wind around Leon's head.

"There," he remarked when he had finished, "that ought to fix you, all right. I've seen neater bandages, but I guess this one will stay on."

"It feels first rate," said Leon. "Now I want a drink of water, and then we can start."

Both boys lay flat on their stomachs on the bank

and leaned out over the stream sucking in the cool water of the running brook.

“Now I am ready for anything,” exclaimed Leon, as they stood up after their drink. “Bring on the Uhlans.”

“I don’t want to see any Uhlans, just at present, I can tell you,” said Jacques. “We have enough troubles without them. Come along, let’s follow this stream for a while.”

They quickly set off along the bank, walking under the great trees. It seemed very quiet and peaceful and there was nothing to remind one that the greatest war in the history of the world was raging all around them.

It was a beautiful summer day. The birds were singing and the myriads of little insects joined in as though there was not a thing in the world that need cause them any worry.

The two young aviators did not feel so care-free, however. They were in a perilous position and they both realized it to the fullest extent. Leon had a constant throbbing in his head to remind him that such things as battles were being fought. Jacques too, though he had said he was

unhurt, walked with a slight limp. He had been bruised by his fall more than at first he had admitted.

"We ought to strike the road pretty quick, I should think," remarked Leon after a few moments.

"Yes, I can see it ahead of us now," said Jacques.

"Do you think it is safe for us to stick to the road?"

"Not very. But we must make time and we might get lost if we go across the country."

"Listen!" exclaimed Leon suddenly.

Both boys instantly stopped.

"I hear hoof-beats," whispered Leon.

"So do I. Lie low here and we'll see who it is."

They crouched down in the bushes, waiting for the horsemen to pass. To their amazement, however, the pace was evidently slackening and finally the horsemen drew rein and stopped. The boys heard voices conversing in German, and peering out from their hiding place, they saw two Uhlans dismount from their horses, not more than

fifty feet distant from where they were standing.

“Only two of them,” whispered Leon.

“That’s all, I guess,” replied Jacques.

The Germans had seated themselves under a tree by the roadside while their horses cropped the grass nearby. They were evidently attached to some scouting party and perhaps had outdistanced their companions. At any rate they seemed entirely at ease and were soon smoking long pipes and conversing freely.

“What shall we do about them?” whispered Leon. “We can’t go back very well.”

“Can you ride horseback?” inquired Jacques.

Leon looked at his friend. He saw at once what the thought in the young Frenchman’s mind was, and he wasted no time in replying.

“I certainly can,” he replied. “I wouldn’t mind a ride back to camp, either.”

Jacques reached for his revolver.

“Come on, then,” he said in a low tone.

Leon quickly drew his own gun and quietly and stealthily the two boys stepped out into the open. They were taking a desperate chance, they were

well aware, but after all, the odds were not against them and they considered the desperate attempt worth while.

The Uhlans still sat under the tree with their backs toward the young soldiers. They were apparently unconscious of any danger. Both boys knew that the slightest noise would arouse them and no North American Indian ever stalked his game more carefully than did these two.

Foot by foot they made their way, each with his gun in his hand. Both were hoping desperately that nothing would cause the Germans to look around. It was nervous work.

Suddenly, when about fifteen feet distant from the Uhlans, Leon stepped on a twig. It snapped and caused both the Germans to start and look around.

Realizing that they were discovered and that further concealment was impossible, the boys with a rush closed in on their opponents.

CHAPTER XXV

A RACE FOR LIFE

BEFORE the Uhlans had a chance to gain their feet the boys were upon them. Without conferring, they had each selected his opponent and the struggle was on in earnest.

Leon fired at his man but missed, and before he had a chance to aim a second time he had tripped and plunged headlong upon his opponent. Over and over upon the ground they rolled, the German trying to wrench Leon's revolver from his hand and Leon striving just as desperately to deal a blow with it or get into a position where he could fire again.

The Uhlan gripped him by the wrist with both hands so that any use of the revolver was out of the question. Leon managed to hold his position on top, however, and with his free hand he desperately clutched his enemy. Squeezing as hard as he possibly could he soon managed to shut off

the German's wind to such an extent that he was forced to remove one of his hands from Leon's wrist and strive desperately to tear loose the grip of his enemy.

Leon held on desperately, however. At the same time, with only one of the Uhlan's hands holding his wrist, he stood more chance of wrenching that free. Both the struggling men were breathing hard, especially the German. His wind was almost shut off and he gurgled as he breathed.

The German was fighting tigerishly to release the viselike hold, and Leon could feel his grasp loosening. His fingers were almost numb now and he was aware that he could not hold on much longer. He had lost considerable blood in his accident that morning and a feeling of faintness began to steal over him.

With one last supreme effort he wrenched his wrist free from the Uhlan's hold. The next instant he had dealt his opponent a crushing blow behind the ear with the butt of his revolver. A shudder ran through the German and he lay still.

Leon rose to his feet gasping. He was taking no chances, however, and quickly divesting the un-

conscious Uhlan of his belt he bound his legs firmly together. His arms he tied firmly behind his back with the scarf he secured from his neck.

Then he turned his attention to Jacques.

The young Frenchman had lost his revolver at the start of the tussle and now a regular wrestling match was going on. Both contestants were trying to grasp each other by the throat and they bit, scratched and pounded. As far as Leon could see, neither one had any decided advantage over the other.

As soon as the young American went to his friend's aid, however, the contest was settled. In a very brief space of time the second Uhlan was lying alongside his companion, his legs and arms tied up in the same manner.

"Now for the horses!" cried Jacques.

The two animals grazing nearby had been frightened by the noise of the gun and the struggle. They were not far away, however, and proved easy for Leon and Jacques to catch. They were beautiful mounts and appeared to be capable of both speed and endurance.

A moment later the two boys were in the sad-

dle, their horses' heads pointed south, once more on their way to the lines of the Allies. They had left the two Uhlans lying by the road-side where they were sure to be found by the next detachment of cavalry that passed. The men were not gagged and would undoubtedly use their voices when they heard their countrymen approaching.

"I wish we could bring them in as prisoners," remarked Jacques in a disappointed voice.

"So do I," agreed Leon. "I'll tell you what I am going to do, though."

He quickly dismounted and running over to the spot where the Uhlans were lying he stripped them of their helmets. One he presented to Jacques and the other he kept for himself.

"These ought to make pretty good trophies," he remarked.

"That's a fine idea," exclaimed Jacques. "I'll send this home to my old father."

Leon once more climbed into his saddle and as he did so, glanced back down the road. What he saw startled him beyond measure.

"Look!" he cried. "Look down the road there, Jacques!"

Jacques did so.

“Uhlans!” he said. “Thousands of them.”

“This is no place for us,” exclaimed Leon.
“We’ll have to run for it.”

Immediately they set spurs to their horses and started down the road at a full gallop.

“Are they following us?” called Jacques.

“They certainly are,” replied Leon, glancing behind him.

The Uhlans were about a half-mile distant and it was evident that they suspected the two horsemen ahead of them. About ten of the Germans had left the main body and at full speed were racing down the road in pursuit.

Leon and Jacques bent low over their horses’ necks and dug their spurs into their flanks. The animals responded nobly and the race was on.

Down the road they dashed at a breakneck speed. Every few moments Leon and Jacques would look behind to see if their pursuers were gaining. The Uhlans were now strung out in a long line, three men who evidently possessed the swiftest steeds, being in advance.

“They’re gaining,” shouted Leon.

Jacques made no reply other than to bend lower in his saddle and dig in his spurs a little deeper.

So far they had covered about three miles and the pursuing Germans had cut down their lead. The three in advance were not more than a quarter of a mile behind now.

The two boys, fleeing for their lives, begged and implored their horses to go faster. The noble animals were evidently doing their utmost, but it was a question whether or not even that would be enough.

Above the noise of the flying hoofs Leon heard a volley of shots fired from behind them. A bullet sang past his ears, but neither boy had any intention of stopping. At least, not unless the horses broke down.

Mile after mile they covered. The Uhlans did not seem to be gaining any now. Also it did not seem as if flesh and blood could endure the grueling pace the horses were maintaining. It was evidently only a question of time before the end of the wild flight must come.

They could not be very far from the French outposts now, thought Leon. He wondered how close

the Uhlans would dare to come to the hostile lines and he murmured a prayer that his horse would hold out a few moments longer.

Another volley of shots rang out.

Suddenly Leon's horse stumbled. Its knees sagged and it fell to the ground, pitching its rider over its head into a ditch beside the road.

Leon was unhurt, however, and sprang to his feet at once. Jacques also had pulled up his horse.

"Go on! Go on!" yelled Leon in his loudest tones.

Jacques paid no attention to his comrade's warning but turned and started back.

"Go on!" screamed Leon. "Don't wait for me! There is no use in both of us being caught."

He drew his revolver and turned to face the on-rushing Uhlans. With a cry of triumph they were racing forward, brandishing their long lances and shouting in German.

They were scarcely a hundred yards distant now, and Leon thought that it would soon be all over as far as he was concerned. He was prepared to die fighting, however, and taking careful aim he fired at the foremost Uhlan. But the distance was

too great for accurate shooting and his bullet went wide of its mark.

With undiminished speed his enemies came on. Jacques had quickly dismounted and taken his place by the side of his comrade. It seemed as if both boys were doomed.

Suddenly from the top of a little knoll in their rear came the rattle of a machine gun.

The three advancing Uhlans crumpled up like paper and fell in a heap on the roadside. Their companions seeing what had happened, immediately turned and fled at their utmost speed in the opposite direction.

Leon and Jacques were so surprised at this sudden turn of events that for some moments they were unable to comprehend what had occurred.

Then a shout from the top of the hill attracted their attention and they turned to see fifteen or twenty men in the uniform of the French infantry calling to them. These men soon joined the boys by the roadside and Jacques learned that they were a scouting party sent out from the same division to which he and Leon were attached.

They had watched the mad race, had recognized

the French and German uniforms by the aid of their field glasses, and had only been waiting for the Uhlans to come within range. They had recognized the two young aviators, and as they had been in the crowd to greet them when they had returned from their previous exploit against the Germans they were overjoyed to be of assistance at this exciting moment.

The three Uhlans were found to be dead, two of their horses were so badly wounded that they had to be shot, and the one Leon had ridden proved to be in the same condition.

To the young American this was almost the hardest part of the whole affair. To this beautiful animal's speed, endurance and nerve he owed his life. The horse's great brown eyes were filled with an expression of pain and suffering, all due to a quarrel in which he had had no voice. It seemed a shame that this faithful animal should lose his life innocently and merely because he had done his duty.

Leon turned away while a revolver was placed at the horse's head and it was instantly freed from its suffering.

“Our lines are only a mile away,” said Jacques.

“Are these men going back?” inquired Leon.

“Yes. I told them of the German army approaching and they think it wise to report for further orders.”

“Well, I’m ready to start at any time.”

The little company marched off down the road, the rapid-fire gun, drawn by a team of big Belgian dogs, leading the way.

They soon passed the sentries and reaching their quarters they hastened to make their report. On their way back they met the same big Irish soldier who had talked to them a few days before.

“Hello, me boys,” he greeted them.

“Hello, there,” said Leon.

“What have yez been doin’ now to git that rag around yer head?” he demanded of Leon.

Leon related their experiences.

“Well, all I can say is,” exclaimed the Irishman, “that if youse two ain’t more careful, Kaiser Willie will be after settin’ a price on yer heads. The idea of tying up poor innocent German soldiers and then to be after stealing the very hilimits off o’ their heads!”

CHAPTER XXVI

BEFORE THE BATTLE

AS a result of the news that Leon and Jacques had brought in, the order was soon given for the army to march. It was decided to withdraw to the westward and take up their position near the city of Mons. The commanders considered that a more favorable spot from which to challenge the German advance than the one which they now occupied.

It was evident that the enemy was pushing forward in great numbers, in fact, overwhelming numbers as far as the present force of the Allies was concerned. Near Mons, reënforcements had been received from the French army, withdrawn from Alsace and Lorraine.

Consequently the order to move was given.

Leon and Jacques marched along with the rest of the troops and in an incredibly short time the army was under marching orders. Squads of cav-

alry were sent out in advance, on both flanks, and also kept in the rear. They acted as a screen to the main army and could easily report the presence in the vicinity of any hostile forces.

It now was late in the day and the dusk was rapidly drawing on. The long lines of soldiers, stretching out into the gray distance, the lumbering gun-carriages, the many ammunition and supply wagons, all made a most impressive scene to the young American boy who had cast in his fortune with France in the great war.

Then far off down the line came a sound from the English troops.

“Are we downhearted?” called some one of them.

“No!” came back the reply of a thousand voices.

A band somewhere ahead struck up the *Marseillaise* and unconsciously the pace of the French soldiers quickened. Soon they were marching along more buoyantly and with more life, and as they sang the words softly under their breath an indistinct murmur arose all along the lines of troops. As the strains of that wonderful tune came to Leon's ears he caught something of the

same spirit that had affected the others. A wave of emotion swelled up inside his breast and furtively he brushed a tear from his cheek.

This was love of country. Thousands of men leaving wives, parents, and children to give up their lives for their land. Crops, just ripe for the harvest, had been left standing in the fields with no one to reap them. The men were at the front, not fighting for glory or for fame, but for their country, and as the strains of the Marseillaise swelled through the deepening dusk Leon wondered if there was a man there who would go back home now if he had the opportunity.

If so, he had seen no signs of such a wish.

At last the music ceased and the army marched on in silence.

“How far is it to Mons?” asked Leon of his comrade.

“About twenty miles, I should say. We have a long tramp ahead of us,” replied Jacques.

“That doesn’t bother me now,” said Leon. “You know I feel in splendid condition; I don’t even seem to get tired any more and certainly we’ve done enough to make us so.”

“You’re right there,” Jacques agreed. “All this strenuous exercise does make you harder, though.”

“I should say it did. I feel as hard as nails; why, I don’t believe even a German bullet would have any effect on me now.”

“Don’t be so sure of that,” said Jacques seriously.

“Well, they couldn’t hit us to-day,” laughed Leon.

“Say, though,” he exclaimed, “those Uhlans had good nerve to follow us as close to our lines as they did.”

“No one ever accused the Germans of being cowards, as far as I know,” replied Jacques.

“Well, that wasn’t only nerve; it seems to me it was foolhardiness.”

“Perhaps they didn’t know how close they were to our lines,” suggested Jacques.

“I guess they couldn’t have known. How would you like to have understood German and stood around and listened to what those two fellows we tied up were saying?”

“I’m afraid the language would have shocked

my ears," said the young Frenchman laughingly.

"Do you think they're still there?"

"No, indeed. I'm sure they let out a few yells when they heard their countrymen passing. I'd hate to meet either of those men again and have him recognize us, wouldn't you? I think they'd do their best to pay us for what we did to them."

"Well, I should say so!" exclaimed Leon.

It was midnight when they arrived at their destination. No stop had been made for supper, so now the fires were lighted and the commissary department put to work. Hot coffee, bread and bacon were served to everyone and then the army rolled itself in its blankets and went to sleep.

Shortly after daybreak the bugles sounded and before long everyone was put to work digging trenches. Leon and Jacques worked along with the others, digging the ditches and throwing the dirt up as an additional protection. Long rows of the trenches soon appeared; in back of which the artillery was set up and placed as a cover for the infantry fire.

"When do they expect the Germans to attack

us?" asked Leon of his comrade during a pause for rest.

"No one knows, I guess, but at almost any time, now. Personally, I think they are more apt to begin an attack at daybreak than any other time."

"Why is that?"

"Well, they can bring their troops up into position under cover of darkness and have them in position when it gets light. If they tried it in the daytime we could follow their movements very easily."

"That sounds reasonable, all right," agreed Leon. "Then we can expect an attack to-morrow morning."

"Possibly. No one can tell."

"I'd like to be in an aëroplane now looking for the Germans," exclaimed Leon. "Also dropping a few bombs down on their heads, would suit me."

"Not much chance of that just now, I'm afraid," said Jacques. "You see we've lost quite a large number of machines lately, and until we can get some new ones I imagine you and I will be just common everyday soldiers."

“Well,” laughed Leon, “digging ditches is fine exercise anyway. Let’s do some more of it.”

Practically all day long they toiled. The vast number of workers had accomplished the task in a very short time, so that by late afternoon everything was announced to be in readiness. A series of trenches had been dug, each one supplementing the others. If the French were driven out of the first line they could withdraw to the next and find just as good protection there as in the other.

The German troops being the aggressors would have to keep in the open more or less. Consequently the advantage would lie with the Allies.

At least the advantage of position would be on their side. It was generally believed that the Germans would far outnumber their opponents and by sheer weight of numbers be able to batter their way through.

Leon and Jacques were discussing this question.

“It may be like two foot ball teams,” suggested Leon. “One team heavier than the other is able to gain slowly even if they aren’t any better players.”

"I do not understand," said Jacques.

"Of course you don't," laughed Leon. "I forgot that you would know nothing about American football."

"I have read of it," said Jacques, "and I have also seen pictures. The players wear great pads and guards on their heads, such as aviators use. It is a cruel game and many people are wounded in it."

Jacques's description of his favorite game amused Leon immensely. He rolled on the ground in his merriment.

"Not many people are wounded by it," he explained. "You receive plenty of bumps and hard knocks but they are good for you. Very few players are seriously injured if they are in good physical condition."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Jacques in surprise. "I always understood that several people were killed in every game."

"You must think it is something like war," said Leon delightedly.

"Yes, but not quite so bad," explained Jacques.

"No," said Leon, "it isn't nearly so bad as war."

I will take you to a game sometime when you come to America."

"I should love to go to America," exclaimed Jacques, his eyes shining.

"Well, what do you say to going to bed first?" said Leon. "We need some sleep before this battle starts to-morrow."

"Why do you say it starts to-morrow?"

"I don't know, but it might as well commence then as any other time. I'm all ready."

"And so am I," said Jacques. "Now for bed."

It seemed to the two young soldiers that they had scarcely rolled themselves in their blankets before they were awakened again. Bugles were sounding on every side and all was hustle and bustle.

The two boys were instantly on their feet and soon joined the regiment to which they had been assigned.

"What is happening?" Leon inquired.

"The Germans are preparing to attack," replied Jacques, after a hurried conversation in French with one of his countrymen. "They are

reported to be advancing in great numbers and we are going to oppose them this morning.”

It was not yet daylight. Everything was in darkness, but this only added to the excitement. No one could see very much or tell what was about to happen and the uncertainty added to the thrill of the situation.

“We’re moving,” exclaimed Jacques a few moments later as one of the bugles sounded.

All about him Leon could see dark masses moving past, everyone headed due north. Soon their regiment started also and in silence they marched along. There was no singing or cheering now; everybody was serious and silent, while an air of tenseness pervaded the entire army.

They advanced about a mile from the camp and then came the command to halt. A few sharp orders were given and the soldiers quickly began to take their places in the trenches. Leon found himself side by side with Jacques as they knelt in their positions.

Both boys were eager for the fighting to commence. The uncertainty and waiting were nerve-

racking and they both felt that when the battle really started it would be a relief.

“They won’t attack before the sun comes up,” said Jacques. “Why don’t you try to get some sleep?”

“Do you think I could sleep at a time like this?” exclaimed Leon. “There is not the slightest chance of it.”

In silence they waited, peering straight ahead of them while minute after minute passed. Suddenly, after what seemed a long time, a ray of light shot across the sky and in the east the rosy reflection of the rising sun could be seen on the clouds.

At that moment a cannon boomed out in front. A shell passed over their heads, screaming as it went. It burst with a roar somewhere in the rear of the place where the two boys were stationed.

The battle was on.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE BATTLE IS ON

ANOTHER shell followed the first. Then another and another came, but the Allies did not reply.

An officer, coming forward to the trenches where Leon and Jacques were stationed, brought the information that the German aim was poor and that so far but little damage had been done. Evidently they had not found the range.

Soon the firing ceased altogether. Gradually the sky grew lighter and lighter so that it was possible to recognize objects at a little distance. Leon glanced about him; he could see the determined faces of the men in the trenches with him; in back were the hills where their artillery was stationed, the mists still enveloping the summits.

Suddenly he heard a faint whirr and looking into the sky over his head he saw an aëroplane. It sailed dangerously low and seemed to be following the line of the French defenses.

“Look there!” he exclaimed.

“They’re getting our range,” cried Jacques. “See how the machine flies just above us. The Germans will know where we are now.”

“Why don’t they shoot at it?” said Leon excitedly.

As he spoke there was heard the bark of a machine gun from the hills in back of them. The aëroplane suddenly crumpled up and pitched headlong to the ground, a mass of useless machinery and wood.

“That’s the way!” exclaimed Jacques. “But suppose you and I were in that aëroplane, Leon.”

“Don’t speak of it. Look, here comes another!”

Sure enough a second machine appeared, following in the course of the first. And it soon followed the fate of the first one, too.

“Two machines gone and I don’t know how many lives,” remarked Leon calmly.

“What do the Germans care for machines or lives?” exclaimed his comrade excitedly. “They want to find the range and they don’t care how much it costs them. Their officers throw away

the lives of their soldiers as if they were worth nothing. The German soldiers are just mechanical men who do as they are told and nothing more. Each man is a part of the big machine and that is all."

"It's lucky for them they have plenty of lives to waste, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Jacques, "but before we are done with them they won't have quite so many."

Once more a cannon boomed; again a shell went whistling over their heads. All along a great fan-shaped line the German artillery now began its bombardment. Shot after shot and shell after shell came pouring into the Allied lines.

Then the French artillery began to reply. The roar of the heavy guns became deafening and the infantry lying in the trenches had to yell to make their voices heard. They had nothing to do now but wait. Rifle-fire was of no value at present.

All at once they saw a huge blue-gray mass approaching. From a distance it seemed to have no definite shape and for a moment it appeared as if a part of the landscape itself was moving.

"The German infantry," shouted Jacques.

"I see them," replied Leon, and he gave one final glance at his rifle.

Then they waited.

On, on and still on came the great hordes of the Kaiser's men. In close formation they marched and were spread out over a vast area of ground. They were still seven or eight hundred yards away and no order to fire had as yet been given.

The German artillery-fire increased in volume as the foot soldiers came up. It was evident that their purpose was to protect the advance as much as possible.

Nearer and nearer came the Germans. When they were about five hundred yards distant the order came to fire. The rifles in the hands of the Allies spat out their bullets and the front rank of the Germans was seen to waver. Only for a second, however, did it falter. The enemy still kept up their approach at undiminished speed.

Above the noise of the battle there arose the sound of a song. The Germans were singing their national hymn, "The Watch on the Rhine." It was an inspiring and awful sound at such a time. The music rising from the throats of thousands

of men walking into the very jaws of death was a sad and terrible thing.

Nearer yet came the Germans. Then the French machine-guns began to send forth their volleys. The closely packed masses of Germans offered targets easy to hit and the slaughter was frightful. Whole ranks were mowed down as wheat in the harvest field falls before the scythe. A shell bursting among the dense hordes would open up yawning gaps where only a moment before men had been seen.

The gaps always closed up immediately, however. The onrushing troops seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of men. They moved bravely forward, the ranks about three feet apart. A man in the front rank would go down and his place was instantly filled by the soldier in back of him.

The slaughter, however, was not confined entirely to the German side. There were dead men in the trenches where Leon and Jacques were lying. Wounded were being carried to the rear constantly. The big Irishman who had spoken to the boys several times was borne past them on a

stretcher. A rifle ball had passed through his left arm, while a fragment of a bursting shell had torn the muscles away from the calf of his leg.

He was protesting vigorously, however, that he was all right, and that he should be allowed to remain in the fight.

Few of the French had been injured by the rifle-fire of their enemies. The aim of the German soldiers appeared to be poor. Their artillery, now that they had the range, however, was deadly, and what execution was done to the Allies could be blamed on the big Krupp guns.

For what might have been six hours or sixty minutes, as far as Leon and Jacques were able to estimate the passing time, the battle continued at its full height. The German infantry had availed themselves of whatever scanty covering the field had to offer. They were not in nearly as strong a position as the Allies, however.

“They’re retreating,” exclaimed Leon suddenly.

“You’re right!” agreed Jacques. “They’re not defeated yet, though, and they’ll be back again soon.”

Sure enough the German troops were withdrawing. They went slowly and in good order. The French machine-guns and mitrailleuses still raked their lines and many were left on the battle field, either dead or abandoned.

For a time there was a lull in the fighting.

“What’s the idea of stopping?” asked Leon.

“I don’t know, unless the Germans are about to attempt something new.”

“How long have we been fighting here?”

“About three hours I should say,” replied Jacques, glancing at the sun.

“Whew, I had no idea how long it had been.”

Fresh ammunition was brought up to the soldiers. Many of the men, almost completely exhausted by the strain of the battle, stretched themselves out at full length in the trenches for a few moments of rest. All along the lines the soldiers were munching the food from their knapsacks and taking long pulls at their canteens. The day was intensely warm, and it was a dirty, powder-smirched body of men that Leon saw as he glanced about him.

“We sent them back once and maybe we can do it again,” said Leon to his comrade.

“They’ll try something else this time, I think.”

A moment later the German artillery reopened fire, this time more determinedly than at first. There was a constant roar of big guns and it seemed as if the army must have received reënforcements.

The batteries of the Allies, stationed around on the different hills, replied strongly. The Germans apparently were bending every effort to put these guns out of commission. The shells all flew over the trenches, aimed at the heavy guns of the Allies in the rear.

“I see their plan,” exclaimed Leon suddenly.

“What is it?”

“They’re trying to silence our batteries before they attempt to send their infantry forward again.”

“You think so?”

“I’m sure of it. They lost too many men before and our artillery was mostly to blame for that. If the Germans can put that out of business they can rush our lines.”

The cannonade was becoming frightful. Tons of lead and steel swept across the trenches, a veritable tornado of death. Gradually the fire of the Allies seemed to slacken. One after another the batteries became quiet, and the German fire was concentrated on the few that still remained active.

“They’re doing what you said, Leon,” remarked Jacques. “One by one they’ve silenced our guns.”

“It looks so, doesn’t it?”

“We’ll see the German infantry coming up again in a minute.”

“Here they come now. More than at first, too.”

The order was passed along the trenches that no one was to fire until the command was given.

The German guns were now turned on the trenches. Only three of the batteries of the Allies seemed to be doing anything at all and these fired only an occasional shot.

“We’ll be slaughtered right here,” said Jacques in a low voice.

“I know it,” replied Leon. “It seems foolish to stay here when all our big guns are out of commission.”

“Well, let’s shoot a few before they get us, anyway,” said Jacques desperately.

“Yes, we can at least do that.”

The great masses of German soldiers could once more be seen advancing. They came faster this time, as if filled with confidence. The Allies’ batteries were now silent and they did not fear the rifle-fire so much.

Nearer and nearer they came, sweeping on like a great human tidal wave. Still no order to fire was given. Leon was almost wild with impatience. It seemed to him that if they were being left in the trenches to be engulfed by overwhelming numbers, they at least should be given an opportunity to defend themselves.

On came the Germans. This time they were singing another song, something Leon did not recognize. They must have been within three hundred yards of his trench when at last the order to fire was passed along the lines.

There was the sharp rattle of musketry from the intrenched Allies and at the same time the batteries on the hill behind poured a rain of death into the advancing Germans. Leon was as-

tounded. Here were these guns that only a few moments before had seemed to be silenced, now as active as ever they had been.

The German lines simply melted before this terrific onslaught. Whole platoons and companies of men seemed to disappear abruptly from the face of the earth. The lines staggered momentarily but still on they came. The Germans coming from behind, did not falter for an instant and still forward swept the great wave.

Over the dead bodies of their comrades they came without hesitation or apparent fear. It was a wonderfully brave and sickening sight. Fire as they would the Allies simply could not load their guns and shoot their enemies fast enough to stem the onrushing tide.

The order came to fall back.

In perfect order and with losses that were small compared with the Germans', the Allies left their trenches and prepared to retreat to the next line of their defenses.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CONCLUSION

THE German advance had been momentarily checked. The Allies, leaving their positions, moved slowly back, still pouring a deadly rain of bullets into the forces of the enemy.

Side by side Leon and Jacques withdrew. The roar of the battle was deafening, while all about them men fell dead or wounded. The two boys had become insensible to such things, however, and in the heat of the fight they took everything as a matter of course.

Neither was able to explain why it was that he now felt not the slightest nervousness or fear; and as calmly as two veterans of a dozen campaigns they loaded and fired their rifles as fast as they were able.

Suddenly a shout arose on their left. The color-bearer of their regiment had fallen, shot

down as he made his way to the rear. For some reason he had been at quite a long distance behind the rest of his troops and was consequently the target of many German guns.

Face downward on the field he lay, the French tri-color prone on the ground.

“Our flag!” shouted Jacques, instantly rushing forward.

“I’m with you, Jacques,” cried Leon, and only a step behind his comrade he ran at full speed in an effort to regain the lost standard.

As they detached themselves from their troops and appeared between the two battle lines, a cheer went up from the Allied soldiers. At the same time the German riflemen tried desperately to cut them down. The bullets screamed and whistled past their ears in a never-ending procession.

But they did not hesitate. On they ran, protecting themselves as best they were able by dodging behind trees or stumps whenever such scant protection offered itself. Spellbound the soldiers watched the two daring youths.

It seemed as if they must fall at any minute, but still they pushed forward. Once Jacques stum-

bled and pitched headlong. A moan arose from the Allies who thought he was hit, but a moment later Leon had grasped him by the arm, raised him to his feet and once more they sped forward.

There was no cover of any kind within a hundred feet of the flag. Coming to this spot the two boys hesitated for the fraction of a second as if steeling themselves for the last rush. Then with heads low they rushed out into the open.

Not one man watching them thought for an instant that they could ever reach their goal. Some guardian angel must have been watching over them, however, for they seemed to be untouched. They reached the flag.

Seizing it in both hands Jacques swung it around his head.

“Vive la France!” he shouted.

A mighty cheer heard even above the noise of the battle issued from thousands of throats. It was a wonderful exhibition of nerve and daring which the brave young Frenchman had given.

But it was not all over yet. They still had the return journey to make, and they wasted no time. Jacques still held the flag high over his head as



SEIZING IT IN BOTH HANDS JACQUES SWUNG IT AROUND
HIS HEAD.

they ran towards the French lines. A rifle ball from one of the German guns broke the pole off short.

The flag fluttered to the ground, but both boys seized it at once and again raised it to view. Jacques held it with both hands in front with Leon following behind, much in the manner of two men lifting a trunk. There was now no pole to hold on to, and as the two young soldiers ran with the flag above their heads they gave the appearance of a great striped, four-legged animal hurrying across the country.

Over countless bodies of dead Germans, French, English and Belgians, they picked their way. Thicker than ever the bullets flew about their ears. Soldiers appreciated their bravery on the field of battle, everyone of their compatriots recognized the marvelous daring of the two boys. Men begged them to bring the flag back safely, not seeming to realize that their entreaties could not possibly be heard or do the least good. Many a grim and battle-scarred soldier breathed a prayer for the safe return of their two young comrades.

Nearer and nearer to their own lines they came.

It seemed miraculous that they should still be alive, but they evidently were, and very much so, too.

Soon they reached one of the trenches. Here they had to climb down and up on the other side; they were out of sight for a moment and then reappeared an instant later.

They stood on the edge of the trench and waved the flag above their heads. With their backs to their own lines they shook their fists at the German troopers and shouted defiance to the Kaiser and all his men.

Then all at once Leon felt a stinging sensation in his right shoulder. It seemed to him as though someone had thrust a red hot needle into his flesh. Black specks danced before his eyes and he became dizzy. He felt himself sinking to his knees, and then everything suddenly became dark.

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When Leon opened his eyes again he did not recall just what had taken place. He found himself lying on a rough cot in a huge tent. All around him were other cots on which other men

also were lying. It all seemed very strange to the young soldier.

All at once he remembered. He must be wounded, he thought, and was now in the hospital. He tried to raise himself on his elbow, but a sharp pain in his right shoulder caused him to sink back with a groan. It all came back to him clearly now.

Where was Jacques? he wondered. They had both been standing together on the edge of the trench when he was hit. Had his comrade been wounded too? Perhaps he had been killed. He must find out at once.

Once more he tried to raise himself. It was a very painful proceeding but he managed to accomplish it at last.

“Well, the saints prasarve us!” a voice exclaimed from the adjoining cot.

Leon looked quickly around. In the bed next to him was his Irish friend whom he had seen carried from the field.

“Where did youse come from?” demanded the Irishman.

“I don’t know,” replied Leon. “I guess I was shot.”

“I guess probably yez was. It’s a great mystery to me yez haven’t been kilt long before this. Where’s yir daredivil friend?”

“I wish I knew,” said Leon earnestly. “Where are we anyway?”

“We’re in the Rid Cross tint, not fer from Mons.”

“Who won the battle?”

“Thot I can’t say fer sure. I think, though, that our min were finally driven off.”

“What a shame!” Leon exclaimed.

“It is a shame, but nivver you fear, me boy, I belave it is all a part of our plan, and fer my part I’d rayther win th’ lasht fight than th’ firrst.”

“That’s true,” agreed Leon. “It counts more, I guess.”

“Did youse see how we fooled thim Germans?”

“When do you mean?”

“Whin we pratinded that all o’ our batteries was out of business. Thot was a foine trick the Inglish larned in the Boer War in Africa. We’d

stop thim guns wan at a toime as if they was no good. Thin whin the Germans got the idea that we couldn't harrm thim no more, they come forward wid a rush. Oh, but didn't we let thim have it thin, though."

"So that was all done on purpose, was it?" inquired Leon. "I couldn't understand what was happening at the time."

Just then a nurse approached.

"Look here, you two," she said sharply. "What do you mean by all this talking? Don't you know you are both wounded and must keep still?"

"Wounded, me eye!" exclaimed the Irishman. "I'll be back in the fight agin in about twinty-four hours and I'm goin' to git mesilf wan o' thim German hilmits like me young frind here brought home the other day."

The nurse laughed in spite of herself. Then she turned to Leon.

"There was a friend of yours here not long ago," she said.

"Jacques Dineau?" asked Leon eagerly.

"Yes, and you'd better be thankful to him.

When you were wounded he carried you on his back, flag and all, to safety. I've heard all about you two, everyone is talking of the way you went after that flag."

"Is Jacques all right?" demanded Leon.

"He most certainly is."

"Thank heaven for that. When can I see him?"

"I've no idea. I think he was ordered away and I think it's a very lucky thing, too. You are two very brave but very reckless young men."

Leon ignored this remark.

"How badly am I wounded?" he asked. "I don't believe it can be very much. It certainly doesn't feel so."

"You'd better go to sleep now," the nurse said, smiling evasively.

"Tell me," insisted Leon, "how long will it be before I can rejoin my regiment?"

"If you must know," she replied, "I'm sorry to say it will be within about three days."

THE END

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